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"*The Story of our Lives from Year to Year.*"—Shakespeare.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A Weekly Journal.

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER FOR 1875,

ENTITLED

DAVY'S LOCKER,

WILL BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XX. A SHIPWRECK.

Up to the time of my arrival at the Rectory, Gertrude had never expressed a wish to stray beyond the house and grounds into the beautiful landscape they commanded, and, knowing Mrs. Hastings's objection to locomotion, she had even declined her invitation to do so; but I was not to be balked of the pleasure I had promised myself in introducing her to the fair scenes which had once, in default of a living subject, inspired my youthful muse. On that very Monday, when I was to have returned to my legal bondage, for example, we spent the live-long autumn day together on Gray Gable. I led her through the hazel copse, all in shade, where hidden brooks scattered their green coolness, and made a murmur which the ring-doves echoed overhead; I led her through the pastures full of kine, and, standing on the high-built, loose-stone walls, I took her dainty hand in mine, and could not choose but squeeze it as I helped her to ascend them. Then, down upon the other side, I waited with spread arms, while she made up her mind to risk the fall, and, risking, jumped—oh joy!—within their circuit. I led her dry-shod across the trembling peat-bog, threading the mazes of the sluggish stream, its presence shown by fluffy cotton plant and pure forget-me-nots. I led her o'er the purpling heather, where the grouse whirred up beneath her foot so suddenly that it brought the flush into her cheek, and whence, for many a mile, stretched lake and fell; but I would not let her turn her shapely head to view them.

"Wait! wait!" said I, and led her to the summit of the fell, where the mountain air was wild to kiss her, and all the mountain world lay peak on peak beneath us, turquoise-set with lake and tarn, and at the verge of all the glimmering sea!

"Now look!" cried I; "now look!" Gertrude had a soul that could appreciate such a scene, and all my poet's fondness for that noble spectacle was doubled at the sight of her enjoyment.

Charming as were our mountain rambles, I think our excursions on the lake were even more to our taste. We had but one old flat-bottomed boat at Stanbrook—a punt with oars—as safe as the Ark, and which drew but very little water; and in this we visited every creek and cove in search of subjects for Gerty's sketch-book, or to pluck lilies wherewith to set forth our modest dinner-table at home.

Gerty had a taste for table decoration, with which she easily inoculated my aunt, and our meals were served in a very bower. But the chief of all our lake amusements was what we were wont to term "explorations." There were numberless little brooks that ran into Stanbrook Mere, and one or two Lilliputian rivers, their embouchures mostly hidden by rushes, and whose very existence was probably undreamed of by the aborigines. It was our delight to make acquaintance with the windings of these unknown streams, and to discover, à la Livingstone, their sources. When we had once pushed through the feathery barrier that fringed their mouths and towered far above us, we found ourselves in a little world of our own, concealed alike from land and lake. The high banks hid our low-lying craft, and greatly astonished were the cattle in the pastures to see two human heads pass noiselessly through the midst of them. None of our own race did we ever meet with, but, doubtless, from that circumstance the number of our other fellow-creatures seemed infinite. The rabbit "fondled his own foolish face" close beside us, as we took our noiseless way; the hare squatted unconcerned, or hopped at leisure from field to wood; the squirrel hung upon the boughs beneath which we pushed, and stared at us with wondering eyes; the rat splashed from his home at our approach, then slid without sound beneath us. The water-world was even more thickly populated than the land. The air was alive with gorgeous dragon flies, which, "swift and free, like golden boats on a sunny sea," flashed incessantly about us, or, settling on rush and flower, tipped them with fairy flame. The stream was literally paved with lilies, which, with the trees that arched our way, made navigation slow, but, ah! not tedious. Our whole progress was a poem. We explored as far as the boat would go, perhaps for a mile or more, sometimes arriving at a farmhouse, which never before had received visitors by such a mode of transit, nor knew that the brook that fringed its fields was a "silent highway."

Such simple leaves from our home diary may seem scarce worth the printing; yet, as a brief record of human happiness, here let them stand.

It was not long before "Brother Alec's" health became so critical that we had little zest for such pleasures. Dr. Wilde was compelled to own that the danger was more imminent than he had expected in so short a period. The case, as regarded saving life, was hopeless, but a prolongation of it might possibly be secured by a more complete change than was afforded by Stanbrook. He recommended sea air. Of course the patient's relatives were at once communicated with. They had silently acquiesced, not only in his continuance at the Rectory, but at my own residence there with Gertrude.

It was well understood by Mrs. Raeburn that "Mr. Alexander" desired us both to be with him, and, perhaps, she clung to the hope that her thus acceding to his wishes would, notwithstanding all his protestations, be found to be not without its reward hereafter. At all events, we had been left for weeks under the same roof. Even now, when it was decided to remove the invalid, Gertrude and I were to stay on together at the Rectory, while Mark and his wife accompanied Brother Alec to a small seaport on the western coast. John was, in the meantime, to manage his father's business at Kirkdale, as best he could; and, as there were naturally many arrangements to be made in view of this, the attorney excused himself from coming in person to fetch his brother. Mrs. Raeburn herself was to do this, and my aunt could scarcely do less than invite her to spend the day with us and her cousin, which accordingly was done.

It must be premised that, though brother Alec had been medically "sentenced to death," and was in appearance greatly worse than he had been when he left the Priory, he was by no means confined to his own apartment, but took his meals with the family, and even retired to rest no earlier than the rest of us. When it was proposed to alter our dinner-hour on this particular occasion, in order that he might arrive at home before nightfall, he combated that idea, and, Dr. Wilde being appealed to, agreed with him.

Notwithstanding that our guest was so confirmed an invalid, and therefore, to some extent, a burden to our household, there was none in it, I think, but was sorry for his approaching departure. Unlike most persons in his sad condition, he was considerate, as well as kind, to all, and his generosity was lavish. As for ourselves, including even my aunt, we should have been better pleased if he had stayed on with us to the last; but, confessedly small as was the chance of his being benefited by removal, no opposition could, of course, be made to the medical recommendation. His gratitude manifested itself in a thousand ways, and his especial favour to myself was shown upon my birthday, which happened to take place at this period, by the present of a beautiful little skiff, which made the ancient pair-oar punt, as it lay beside it in the boat-house, look dingy and undignified enough. He had also purchased a horse for Gertrude, on which she sometimes accompanied my uncle on his rides; and seeing that Mrs. Hastings had a passion for such ornaments, he had increased my aunt's stock of jewellery by a magnificent diamond ring, for which it was a marvel to me how she found a vacant space on her fingers.

On the morning of his departure, which he believed to be his final farewell, he had a private talk with each of us.

"If I have been disappointed in my kinsfolk, Harry," said he to me, in the difficult and almost painful fashion in which his disease now compelled him to speak, "I have found dear friends where I had not looked for them. God bless you, lad; and, above all things, take care of Gerty."

I thought this injunction had reference to our future, and I confessed my hope that I should prove worthy of such a wife, in case I should be so blessed as to secure her.

"Yes, yes," sighed he, "you were made for one another, you two." Then he relapsed into silence, sunk in dreams, doubtless, of his own far-back youth, and of the wife he was about to rejoin in heaven, from which he roused himself to shake my hand, and once more murmur, "Take care of Gerty."

Mrs. Raeburn arrived in a very gracious mood, and full of thanks to my aunt for her kindness to "Mr. Alexander." She expressed herself delighted at the improvement in Gertrude's health, and professed so great an interest in her occupations, while at Stanbrook, that the dear girl had to take her to the stable and the boat-house, where, no doubt, she appraised in her own mind the cost of both horse and skiff. When my aunt (rather maliciously) drew her attention to the diamond ring, her visitor could not restrain a snort of indignation.

"That must have cost a pretty penny," was her significant remark; and the idea of so much money having gone out of the family so weighed upon her spirits that, though she was wont to take advantage of all gratuitous entertainments to the uttermost, she scarcely touched a morsel at dinner.

After a most sad parting—for how should it not have been sad, when we never thought to meet him more, and poor Gerty could not say, "I hope to see you better," without tears that belied her words — brother Alec went off in the yellow fly, with Mrs. Raeburn beside him, very fussy and attentive about his supplementary cushions. It was a lovely evening, and Gerty and I ran across the lawn to wave our last adieu to him, as he passed by the stone steps; but by that time he was leaning back with his eyes closed, as though utterly prostrated by his emotions. Mrs. Raeburn seemed to have already exhausted her solicitude on his account, and was gazing intently on the lake—so neither noticed our presence. We stood together in sad silence, watching the vehicle till it was hidden by an angle of the road. The noise made by its retreating wheels, and the murmur of a distant beck from the hill above us, alone disturbed the hush of night; the moon was rising and ploughing a silver furrow across the mere.

"How beautiful it would be upon the lake to-night, Gerty!" said I. "Would you like a row on the water?"

Gertrude eagerly, though gravely, assented. There was something, doubtless, consonant with her solemn thoughts, in the suggestion which, with me also, had not been a mere pleasurable impulse. Our talk, as we went towards the boat-house, was of brother Alec, and of the slender probability that we should ever see him alive again. It had been my intention to use the skiff, but the key of its chain, which was generally hung on a particular nail, was nowhere to be found; this was the more singular, since, when Gertrude had brought Mrs. Raeburn down to the boat-house, she had left her there to fetch this very key from the house, in order that she might take her a few yards in the new boat, and she seemed quite positive about having hung it on the nail, as usual, when the little voyage was over. However, since the key was not there, I proposed, with a young man's impatience of anything opposing itself to his pleasure, to file away the chain—for the place was tool-house as well as boat-house; but Gertrude said, "To do that would be a pity, why not take the old punt?" So this we did. It had served our turn well enough until the skiff had put us out of conceit with it, but it was certainly not an A 1 craft. In that portion of it where Gertrude and I sat, it was tolerably dry, but on the other side of the "well" there was generally a little water, which washed and rippled as we moved. There seemed to be more leakage than usual this evening, but, nevertheless, in we got, and a few strokes carried us into deep water. I pulled on, talking in a low voice to Gerty on the sad subject that occupied our thought, neither of us taking much heed to external objects, when suddenly I became conscious that the boat was "dragging" in a very unusual manner; it seemed also to be lower in the water than when we started.

Something in the expression of my face caused Gertrude the next instant to look round, and she then exclaimed, "Oh, Harry, the punt is full of water! It is almost up to the well!"

By that time I knew that it was sinking under us, and was debating in my mind what was to be done. We were nearly in the centre of the lake, at least a quarter of a mile from the nearest land, and Gertrude could not swim a stroke. The lake was very deep, nor was there another boat upon it, except the skiff that lay locked in the boat-house, to bring us aid.

"We are sinking, Harry! Is it not so?" asked Gertrude in solemn tones, and regarding me very earnestly. "Take off your boots and swim to land."

I did not heed her for the moment, for I was looking about me for a certain object, near to that spot, and which the moon might be bright enough to show me.

"Why should we both drown, Harry?" continued she, piteously; "you cannot save me, but you may still save yourself."

"Thank God," cried I, "there is the flag!" and I pulled frantically to where a metal pennant on an iron staff stood a few inches above the water. This was a mark my uncle had caused to be put up since the arrival of the skiff, to show the presence of a hidden rock, which in dry weather, such as the present, came near enough to the surface of the lake to injure such a craft, though the punt, being flat-bottomed, could at all times float over it.

We were now close to this object, and I bade Gertrude seize the staff, and hold to it. When we ceased to move, the boat did not fill quite so rapidly, and I had time to throw off my boots and prepare for the task before me.

"When the boat goes down, Gerty," cried I, earnestly, "you must cling to the flag, while I swim to fetch the skiff. If you do not lose your nerve, and thereby let go your hold, you will be safe, for the rock will sustain you."

I was quite ready now; we were close together, her face, white with terror, and looking in the pale moonlight of an unearthly beauty, was close to mine. I kissed it for the first time—alas! I feared it was also for the last.

"My darling," I murmured, "keep up your heart. Do not look on the water, lest you grow faint with fear; shut your eyes, or look on the hills."

At that supreme moment (so curious are the workings of the human mind) I remembered that phrase of the Psalmist, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help," as though it had some literal reference to our emergency.

"I shall pray to God, and think of naught but Him, and you, Harry," answered Gertrude, calmly.

No help of man was indeed to be hoped for. If boats could have been procured, there was nobody to man them; the scattered population of Stanbrook had by this time retired to rest; not a light was to be seen, except from the window of the Rectory drawing-room, where my aunt and uncle, seated by the tea-urn, were wondering, no doubt, what had become of their "young people." Inexorable Nature looked down upon us on all sides in contemptuous beauty: the hills and valleys, that had so often seemed to greet us with their smiles, now smiled as placidly upon our doom. There were now many inches of water in the punt, and since in a few seconds it must needs be submerged, I persuaded Gerty to leave it, and trust herself to the flagstaff. Her head and shoulders were alone above water, but there was firm ground beneath her. When her weight was removed the boat lifted a little, and I had time to see her so far safe. As I beheld her clinging to that iron staff, so piteously, I was reminded of an allegorical picture I had somewhere seen of a female saint, who clings to the cross above the Rock of Life; the moonlight on her brow seemed a very halo.

"God save you, Gerty!" cried I, as the boat sank under me.

"God save you, Harry!" came floating to me, in answer over the wave, as I struck out for shore.

THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN IN PARIS.

The offices exercised here, in relation to the theatres, by our Lord Chamberlain, are in France discharged by a formally constituted authority, entitled, "La Commission de Censure." Absolute liberty has but rarely, and for very limited periods, been enjoyed by the French stage. Only, indeed, when revolution and the overthrow of order have come to its aid; that is to say, from 1791 to 1794; from 1830 to 1835; and from 1848 to 1850. Some release from constraint occurred also during the National Defence Government of 1870; but the imminent troubles of the country at this time had, of necessity, reduced the theatre to insignificance, even in the eyes of the most playgoing of publics; and with the entry into Paris of the army of Versailles, and the assumption of power by Marshal MacMahon, the stage was subjected once again to State supervision and control.

The censorship of the drama was first formally established in France in the year 1699. At a much earlier date, however, there had been dealings with the subject on the part of the governing power. An historian of "la censure dramatique" has discovered that, even so far back as the year 789, there was issued an ordinance prohibiting the grossness of speech and gesture, which certain public performers of that remote period had permitted themselves; but these were, of course, buffoons and posture-makers, rather than regular players. In 1402, Charles the Sixth empowered the Confrères de la Passion to present dramatic performances, subject to the supervision of certain officers of the court. Like privileges, with like limitations, were granted by Charles the Seventh, and by Charles the Eighth. During subsequent reigns the actors continued to be subject to intermittent interference of a more or less systematic kind. It was not until the seventeenth century, however, that acting presented any claim to rank as a fine art in France. The Comédie Française had been instituted; Louis the Fourteenth had evinced a desire to patronise and encourage the drama; nevertheless, the actors did not enjoy very good repute—were, in general, but contemptuously regarded by their public, the church especially reprobating them and denouncing the theatre in the strongest terms. And then dramatic art had acquired, somehow, certain satirical and aggressive attributes. It opposed formal authority; it ventured to attack and deride the nobility, the clergy, the magistracy, even royalty itself. In 1706 the Lieutenant of Police was exclusively charged with the control of the theatres, the censorship being comprised in his authority. Still, the king's good pleasure and the influence of the nobility often superseded the dictates of the censor, while parliament and the clergy assumed also a right of independent action in the matter. Thus the proceedings of the censor were not distinguished by uniformity; his decrees were not of equal application throughout the country. Sometimes it happened, indeed, that a play strictly forbidden in Paris was favoured, nevertheless, with unrestricted representation in the provinces.

The Revolution—overturning law, and order, and prescription, and doing other very strange things—released the stage from the censorship. The Revolutionary Government, however, entertained parental sentiments, and possessed its own dictatorial element. Up to 1789 the censorship was concerned mainly with preventing attacks upon royalty and religion; moral principles were left to take care of themselves; the stage was not credited with a didactic mission. But, by a decree of 1793, it was ruled that upon certain of the Parisian stages the tragedies of Brutus, William Tell, and Caius Gracchus should be performed regularly three times a week, with other plays setting forth the glorious incidents and results of revolution, and celebrating the virtues of the champions and defenders of liberty. In August, 1790, La Harpe, at the bar of the National Assembly, had demanded, in the name of the dramatic writers of France, "La liberté spirituelle et industrielle de la scène." Then followed a remarkable debate. Among the speakers were Maury, Robespierre, and Mirabeau. "La censure" was re-established by a gradual process. In the year eight of the Republic, Lucien Bonaparte, being Minister of the Interior, was charged with the supervision of the theatres, and by a decree of Napoleon's, bearing date the 8th June, 1806, and audaciously illegal in its terms, the office was permanently re-instituted, and the drama again became subject to the criticism and approval of a Government functionary.

Under virtue of the charter of 1830, the censorship was absolutely abolished. But Louis Philippe did not long respect the provisions of the charter; soon, indeed, thrust his umbrella through it in various places. The theatres again lost their liberty in 1835, after a prolonged parliamentary debate, in which figured prominently MM. Sauzet, Odilon Barrot, Liadières, Lamartine, Charlemagne, Étienne, and Thiers. This revived censorship continued in operation until the Revolution of 1848, when the stage was once more set free, only to resume its bonds, however, some two years later, when reactionary opinions in their turn obtained the ascendency. A law, passed in 1850, restored "la censure," but for a term only. Then came the coup d'état. An unconstitutional decree, issued by Louis Napoleon on the 30th December, 1852, made permanent this provisional measure. The censorship has since flourished very vigorously. The drama was placed under the strictest surveillance. Great watchfulness prevailed lest anything should be said from the stage, directly or indirectly favouring liberty, or opposing absolutism.

Of necessity "la censure" must busy itself about trifles; dictators are sensitive, and little things give them offence. And then it is so easy for the stage to offend, with or without intention! The dramatist's words may be, or may seem, harmless enough; but special emphasis, a gesture, or even a glance on the part of the actor, may invest them with curious point, and reference, and purpose. Moreover, the opportunities of provoking "la censure" are so frequent. Can count be kept of every performance night after night? Can close observation be maintained of every performer upon every stage in France? To prevent a representation, to interdict some particular play, that is not difficult. It is the minor matters that are so hard and trying to deal with. No wonder there exists such an abundance of ministerial circulars and notifications addressed now to the managers of theatres, and now to the préfets representing the Government in provincial France. If there has been theatrical shortcoming or wrongdoing, it has not been for want of instruction and direction on the part of authority. Every detail of dramatic representation would seem to have been duly considered and made the subject of official correspondence. Much of this correspondence, it may be noted, was made public by the sacking of the Tuileries.

The censorship has for its subordinate officers "les inspecteurs des théâtres," who are entitled to free admission to the theatres at all times, two seats being expressly reserved for them on the night of the first representation of any new or revived play, whether this event shall occur on a Sunday or not. It is even expressly ordered, that the "coupons" for the two seats shall be sent to the office of the inspectors, not later than the night before the representation in question. The inspectors are also to be present at the three last general rehearsals of any new work, and forty-eight hours' notice of the time fixed for these rehearsals is to be forwarded to them. Moreover, one of these rehearsals is to be a complete performance, "avec décors, costumes, et accessoires." No rehearsal is to occupy more than six hours, or, if in the evening, to be carried on after midnight. A day's interval is always to occur between the last rehearsal and the first public representation. These prescriptions are alleged to be the more necessary in that on certain occasions "la bienveillance de l'administration" has been abused, and rehearsals accomplished so imperfectly and hurriedly, that the inspectors have not had sufficient time allowed them to make the changes they thought necessary in the play, or to suppress such portions of the text as they disapproved. The managers are requested to render these rehearsals as complete as possible, and in such a manner "à ne dissimuler aucun des effets de la représentation." The inspectors are to accord their "visa" only after a thoroughly complete rehearsal has taken place, and after the alterations they have directed have been satisfactorily executed; and the managers are enjoined to treat the inspectors with the respect due to public functionaries engaged in the execution of their legal duties, and to give such instructions as may be necessary to the officers and servants of the theatre, to secure this object. All necessary directions as to the advertisements of the theatre, and the posting of its playbills, the managers are to receive from the Préfet of Police or his agents.

Managers are further cautioned against a reprehensible habit they have acquired, of alloting parts for study by members of their company, and even of permitting plays to be rehearsed, without having previously obtained for them official sanction. The titles of plays are not to be "dénaturés ou doublés" upon the programmes, which should agree in every respect with the descriptions supplied to the minister, and approved by him. In addition to the examination of the costumes by the inspectors at the dress rehearsals, the manuscripts submitted to the censor are to exhibit fully the characters assuming uniforms, or official costumes, in the course of the performance, with particulars of such home and foreign orders and decorations as it is proposed that the actor should wear. Concerning "gag" and unauthorised "jeux de scène," or stage business, the minister is severe. He finds that, official prescriptions notwithstanding, plays are not presented in exact conformity with the manuscripts approved by "la commission de censure," and that after the first performance, the actors, believing themselves relieved of responsibility, frequently restore forbidden passages, and introduce phrases and stage business, such as the minister must disapprove. Accordingly a special commissioner is appointed to take note of these breaches of order, so that, professedly, the actors may be constrained to respect the text of their authors. Upon another occasion the minister delivers his opinion upon the subject of slang, and the growing fondness of the stage for "locutions vulgaires et brutales, et de certaines termes grossiers empruntés à l'argot." He holds this to be "un mauvais élément de bas comique dont le bon goût se choque, et qu'il ne n'est pas permis de tolérer d'advantage." He charges the managers to assist and second in this regard the efforts of "la commission de censure," impressing upon them the necessity of exercising their legitimate influence with that object. All dramatic works cannot, he concedes, pretend to the same purity of language; difference of kind implies and warrants difference of form; but even for the most frivolous of stages, he maintains, there are rules and limitations, which cannot be disregarded, except at the cost of propriety and public morality.

The managers of Paris, in pursuance of the legislation of 1850, were required to submit to the Minister of the Interior, for his examination and approval, a full list of the works constituting the respective repertories of their theatres. The list was to comprehend every play in course of representation, or capable of being represented without further study, by the existing company of each establishment. The manuscripts of new works were to be lodged in duplicate with the minister, at least fifteen days before the projected representation, whatever might be the nature of the production—play, opera, cantata, detached scene, romance, "chanson ou chansonette." One copy of the work would be retained by the minister, and deposited among the archives of his office. The other, presuming it to be found unobjectionable, would be returned to the manager, duly signed by the minister, and sanctioned for representation.

The préfets of France have received strict instructions, from time to time, touching the dramatic representations of the provinces. The plays of Paris are to be examined and approved anew, before they can be submitted to a country audience. The repertories of the provincial theatres are to be examined by the préfets, who are to be at liberty to forbid any work they deem objectionable. It is pointed out that much must be left to the discretion of the préfets in this respect, and that no positive rule for general application can be laid down by the minister. A play that may be harmless in one place may produce perilous consequences in another. By way of example, it is pointed out that the opera of Les Huguenots, in spite of its great popularity, has never been presented in countries "où les querelles religieuses ont laissé de funestes souvenirs, et ne pourraient être remises en question sans un certain danger." The préfets are bidden to appreciate local and exceptional circumstances, which may affect a performance from a religious or political point of view. Any sanction they may have unadvisedly given they are promptly to recall, in the event of the occurrence of unlooked-for disorders in the theatre. In short, the préfets are to prevent absolutely any representation that seems dangerous to the public peace, or likely to engender in the public mind sentiments of discontent and hostility, such as the Government specially desires to suppress and extinguish.

Perhaps no play ever gave so much trouble to censors and licensers as the notorious Dame aux Camélias of M. Alexander Dumas fils. We had our difficulties with it in England; it furnished an illustration of the anomalous system of government to which the British theatre is subject. As the libretto of Verdi's opera, our Lord Chamberlain bestowed his approval upon La Dame aux Camélias. It might be immoral, he was prepared to admit, but then the music made such a difference! An improper libretto was deodorised, as it were, by melody; sin was redeemed by song. But on no account would he permit the performance of the drama, unaccompanied by the music of the Italian composer, except after submission of the text to a process of expurgation that was, in truth, evisceration, and mortally injurious to the author's design. La Dame aux Camélias is, therefore, only known in England as La Traviata, in which work, by-the-way, the scene of action is referred to a remote operatic time and place; no distinct idea of nationality is conveyed, and the characters appear in costumes of a fanciful kind. An uninformed auditor could scarcely imagine that the story purported to be of modern date—to reflect Parisian life and manners of only yesterday. However, as M. Dumas has himself set forth, the course of the play in France, from the desk to the stage, was attended by quite as many misadventures as have befallen the work in England.

La Dame aux Camélias, written in 1849, was first submitted to the manager of the Théâtre Historique (M. Dumas the elder), who undertook its production at an early date. The play was read to the company, and the parts were duly distributed. Then came the termination of M. Dumas's career as a manager and the closing of his theatre. La Dame aux Camélias was left homeless; but one of the actors, M. Hippolyte Worms, who had been present at the reading of the play, furnished a very favourable account of it to M. Bouffé, a director of the Vaudeville Theatre. In the year 1851 it was resolved that the work should be presented upon the stage of the Vaudeville.

But "la censure" interdicted the play, M. Léon Faucher being then Minister of the Interior. Here was a difficulty indeed! How was it to be overcome? "Nothing is easy in France," writes M. Dumas. "Do you want to know where all the crowds of people you meet in the street are hurrying to? They are going to beg something of somebody—to entreat someone to do something." M. Bouffé had an influential friend—M. Fernand de Montguyon. M. Fernand de Montguyon was the friend of M. de Morny; M. de Morny was the friend of Prince Louis Napoleon, who was then President of the Republic, and whose minister was M. Léon Faucher. These were the links in the chain which had to be set in motion, pulled, but not too violently; at one end of it "la censure," at the other M. Dumas the younger.

After an interview with M. Bouffé, M. de Montguyon paid a visit to M. de Morny, and explained to him the state of the case. M. de Morny, desirous of fully comprehending the matter, attended one of the rehearsals of the play. It did not seem to him an objectionable work. He recommended the author, however, to seek literary support—to obtain a sort of certificate of merit from certain of his fellow authors of established reputation. This done, M. de Morny would be happy to address himself to the Prince-President upon the subject. Accordingly M. Dumas sought his friends MM. Jules Janin, Léon Gozlan, and Émile Augier; the last named had just won from the Academy "le prix de vertu" for his drama of Gabrielle. These gentlemen duly read and considered La Dame aux Camélias, and signed for its author "un brevet de moralité." This was forthwith sent to M. de Morny, who carried it to the Prince-President, who sent it to M. Léon Faucher, who—persisted in prohibiting the representation of M. Dumas's drama.

It was in vain that M. Dumas the elder, in the interest of his son, sought an audience of M. Léon Faucher. M. Dumas the elder was then at the height of his fame; he was the most popular writer in France; he had readers and admirers in every quarter of the globe. The minister declined to see the author, who at length withdrew, meditating over the repetitions of history. His son's experiences had been his own twenty years before, when "la censure" of the Restoration had prohibited his drama of Christine. The Government of the Restoration was not the same as the Government of the Republic, but "la censure" had not changed much. "I'll bide my time," said M. Dumas the younger, as his father had said before him. "There's no knowing what may happen," added M. de Morny, prophetically.

There was nothing to do but to wait; so much was certain. Meantime the prospects of the play improved somewhat. Madame Doche, the famous actress, had become most anxious to personate M. Dumas's heroine; and Madame Doche exercised considerable influence over M. de Persigny, an important personage at that date.

But what chiefly helped the play on to the stage was the coup d'état. From the famous 2nd of December M. de Morny filled the place of Minister of the Interior, which M. Léon Faucher had been constrained to vacate. "I am not naturally malevolent," writes M. Dumas, "but I could not shed tears at the fall of M. Faucher. I will even confess that it made me very happy." For, three days after the nomination of M. de Morny, La Dame aux Camélias was formally licensed for representation. It was first produced on the 2nd of February, 1853. Its successful "run" was only stopped by the arrival of holiday time and hot weather. It established M. Dumas fils as a dramatist—although it had been hurriedly written in eight days, and is, in truth, very inferior, as a work of art, to his later writings for the theatre—and it made the fortunes of the Vaudeville management.

The story of the misadventures of La Dame aux Camélias is not yet complete, however. When, on the re-opening of the Vaudeville in the autumn, it was proposed to reproduce the play and renew its success, "la censure" again intervened to prevent the representation. M. de Morny was no longer Minister of the Interior. Strange to say, that office was now filled by one whose friendship for La Dame aux Camélias had, at one time, been deemed quite beyond question. M. de Persigny was minister, and there were to be no more "cakes and ale!" But this state of things was not to be borne. M. de Morny, acting on behalf of the dramatist, had submitted to the decision of M. Léon Faucher. That was in the days of the Republic, however. The Empire was now at hand. M. de Morny simply overruled M. de Persigny, and La Dame aux Camélias again took possession of the stage, from which it has not since been driven.

Yet M. Dumas, all his experiences of "la censure" notwithstanding, offers no serious opposition to the institution. "Denounce it," he writes, "but, at the same time, pray that it may not be abolished!" He ridicules it, he despises it; still he would have it preserved. But his argument arises from his fears. He dreads lest something worse should happen to the dramatist. Suppress the censorship, he says, and the day after we are under the jurisdiction of the police! The theatres will be assimilated to the street, and at the first scandal or disorder the constable will shut up the shop, and confiscate its wares. We shall be relieved of a well-intentioned functionary, and fall into the hands of spies and informers; and whenever the Government of the time needs, for purposes of its own, a theatrical scandal, it will send some fifty of these gentlemen to the theatre, to excite a disturbance, and there will be an end of play, playwright, players, and playhouses. Then genuine regret will be felt for the good old "censure," with its glassless spectacles and its blunt scissors, sitting quietly in its chimney corner—a somnolent duenna, whose keys the dramatic muse easily filches when desirous of escape and freedom.

No, says M. Dumas, it is better to respect "la censure." Let us wrap it up carefully in cotton wool—it is but a phantom enemy. If it did not exist, it would be advisable to create it. If it injures anybody, it does not injure us. We have the right of crying aloud against it: a good thing for French lungs needing such exercise. But, in truth, it transacts our business for us, better than we could do it ourselves. It stands between us and the Government. It is our protection, guarantee, and security. When once its "visa" has been obtained, we can sleep safely and soundly. If the Government complains to us, we reply: "It's your affair now; it does not concern us. Your 'censure' has approved; blame your 'censure' if you like; don't blame us."

Further, M. Dumas argues, "la censure" has never been able to withhold from representation any work of real merit, from Tartuffe to the Mariage de Figaro; from the Mariage de Figaro to Marion Delorme; from Marion Delorme to the Fils de Giboyer. Sooner or later, "la censure" has had to give way; the dramatist forces the barricade, or climbs over it, or creeps beneath it. "La censure" is a folly of a harmless kind—a superstition—dear to Governments; respect it therefore! It costs but fifty thousand francs; it feeds and clothes various persons, perhaps six in number, altogether. It is but a scarecrow which frightens no one—just such a scarecrow as gardeners, cherishing tradition, are careful to affix to their cherry-trees, to save the fruit from the attacks of the sparrows; who, nevertheless, knowing all about the scarecrow, visit the trees persistently, and consume as much fruit as they list. But the gardener is satisfied; he has done his duty; and the sparrows have done theirs according to their lights. It is a good thing to laugh, says M. Dumas. Laugh, therefore, at "la censure." Don't mistake for a serious thing what is a mere joke. If we cannot laugh at it, what has become of the good old French light-heartedness of Rabelais, of Lesage, of Voltaire?

It is hard, our author confesses, that for long years Victor Hugo should have been forbidden his native stage; that the Lucrèce of Ponsard should be denied representation; that various other dramatists should be condemned to silence; that numberless unknown writers should continue unknown, their title to fame forfeited, their claim to good fortune ignored by an irresponsible and despotic institution. But what then? All chefs-d'œuvre (including the plays of Shakespeare) are born under a despotic Government. A chef-d'œuvre has time before it, it can afford to wait; and it is much more difficult to write a good play than to obtain its representation after it has been written. Let us begin with writing good plays—that done, it will be time enough to attack "la censure."

No doubt, M. Dumas continues, what we all desire is absolute liberty, the only censor the playgoer; no third party intervening between the producer and the consumer, the dramatist and his public; the abolition of all restrictions, surprises, interferences. That would be noble, simple, dignified, and honourable to all concerned. But it cannot be—it is a dream, impossible of realisation in France—"pays flétri par la censure." And in England—well, M. Dumas does not know much about England, but he knows that, with all its boasted freedom, England has never witnessed in its theatres any representation of his Dame aux Camélias!

M. Dumas's arguments must not be accepted too literally. His mind is not specially logical, and he writes for effect, and to startle, rather than to convince. His defence of "la censure," if defence it is to be considered, was penned under the Empire, when it behoved a writer to be conciliatory or to be silent. If he did not really believe the Government of that day to be the best of all possible Governments, and its "censure" the best of all possible "censures," it was prudent to pretend that he did. And he restricted himself to choosing between the despotism of the police-serjeants, and the despotism of "la commission de censure," it not occurring to him, apparently, that he had any other choice in the matter. It is quite clear to him, indeed, that despotism of some kind is not to be avoided, all the circumstances of the case being duly considered. Moreover, Government is, in his eyes, invariably hostile and oppressive; insomuch that such an institution as "la censure" is a convenient screen and buffer, to be interposed between the individual and authority. His hopefulness as to the ultimate success of merit, all action of the censorship to the contrary notwithstanding, is a Frenchman's hopefulness, founded on experience of great and sudden changes in the order of things. It seems safe in France to count upon the coming of a restoration, or a coup d'état, or a revolution to right the wronged—or, at any rate, to upset authority, and create confusion, in which, somehow, men may contrive to enjoy their own again. In such wise results the opinion that "la censure" may be submitted to, because it cannot be long-lived; that the law of change affects it vitally and incessantly; and that assuredly the Léon Fauchers of Government will be replaced by the De Mornys, and the De Mornys by the De Persignys. The French dramatist has but to wait. But arguments of this kind are of little application in England. Our Lord Chamberlains succeed each other, and resemble each other very much indeed. Reforms in our system of censorship can only be effected by Acts of Parliament; and, for better or worse, legislation dealing with fine-art questions is of rare occurrence in England.

THE SIX FATHERS-IN-LAW.

I HAD only been a week in Alexandria, whither I had been summoned from India to take the chief command of the secret police, when one day, in one of the narrow back streets near the Public Gardens, who should I run up against but an old friend of mine, whom I had not seen for ten years.

Hagan was a great burly Irishman, reckless and good-natured, who had spent the years since I last saw him trading in Abyssinia. He looked browner and harder than when I first knew him, and one or two scars about his face showed that he had not been without his rubs. He soon told me his story. He had fallen in love with a beautiful Greek girl, and hoped shortly to be married.

"But, bedad, the worst of it all is, old boy," said he, "that the brute of a mother wants Athenea to marry a cursed German-Jew banker—Schelmer, you know, the fellow who is doing very well with Gulheim as a banker; and if the mother can pick a quarrel with me she will, though Athenea and I are engaged. But come and see my beauty."

I looked round in astonishment, for the place looked like a blind alley, and no rich person's house could possibly be situated in such a locality. He noticed my surprise.

"You don't know how people live here. In the old times rich men concealed their wealth by living in these out-of-the-way places. It's not half a bad place inside."

We stopped at a dingy door and rang a rusty bell. An old Arab woman, who came to the door, recognised Hagan with many smiles, and at once showed him upstairs. They exchanged a few words in Arabic.

"The ladies are all at a party at a Greek friend's, close by; but I'll soon wake them up," said Hagan, as we ascended some stairs and entered a splendid room, richly furnished. He struck a match and, lighting two wax candles, went to a back window, and waved them two or three times. Almost the moment after the agreed-on signal in such cases was answered by the wave of a candle at a window opposite, from whence there came sounds of music, and a little head peeped out and said something in Italian.

"They'll be over directly," said Hagan, "and I think you'll say she's a beauty. I want to get her away, because that brute Schelmer is there to-night, and the old mother will be making play with him."

In a minute or two a little Greek girl, Philina, a sister of Athenea, came bounding up the stairs, and shook Hagan by the hand. "They'd hardly let us come, Mr. Hagan," she said, laughingly; "for Athenea was just going to dance with that dreadful man, Mr. Schelmer; but I made them."

By this time the party had swept in. The father, an old Arab, with a fine beard and a significant face; the cross, vulgar-looking Greek mother, much overdressed; and the fair Athenea, her fine black eyes looking cloudy and rueful, on the arm of the German banker, a cunning-looking, impertinent upstart, with dyed hair and moustaches. By his side was a little, sleek, obsequious man, whom I found to be Gulheim, Schelmer's partner.

The mother was indignant at the interruption of their festivity. The old Arab father tried in vain, by soft words, to mitigate his wife's anger. Athenea gave Hagan a look that subdued for a moment the storm that was evidently fast rising. I was introduced, and we all sat and talked in an uncomfortable way for some time, till at last Athenea's mother rose.

"I think we must now wish you good evening, Mr. Hagan," she said, in a sharp, staccato voice, "and rejoin our friends, whom we so abruptly left. Come, Athenea, take Mr. Schelmer's arm."

Athenea gave a melancholy look at poor Hagan, and off sailed the party, leaving the old Arab to vainly attempt to console my indignant friend.

"I do all I can, my dear boy, for you," groaned the old man; "but my wife is entirely carried away by this German rascal, who is said to be so enormously rich, and is sought after by everyone. Allah, Mashallah! but I have no more power in my own house than the boy who cleans the boots. Still, count on me for doing all I can for you. She has been very rude to you to-night. I am ashamed of my wife. I am, indeed."

I had not seen Hagan for about a week after this uncomfortable visit, when one afternoon he rushed into my office in a violent state of excitement. His hair was tumbled, his coat all over dust, and he had a cudgel in his hand. He threw himself in a chair, and burst into an hysterical laugh.

"I've done it!" he said; "I've done it!"

"Done what? No harm, I hope?"

"I've given that fellow Schelmer the soundest bating ever man had. They'd thrown me over and given Athenea to the German; and to-day they all went to a picnic near Pompey's Pillar. I knew of the affair, and hid myself behind a sand-heap. They all came up riding on donkeys, and there was the mother driving Athenea, and she crying all the time, and Schelmer riding by her side. As soon as I saw them, over I leaped, and with my bit of a stick I knocked Schelmer and half a dozen of his Jew friends off their donkeys, and putting Athenea in a buggy I had brought with me, I drove her off in the sight of them all; and where do you think I hid the beauty?"

"Can't imagine," said I, in astonishment at the rash abduction.

"Why, in a powder magazine—in a powder magazine, my boy, out by Aboukir. I bribed the sentry there to take care of her, and we start for Malta in the next steamer. Schelmer shall never have her, if I die for it."

"You must give her up to her parents at once," I said emphatically. "You need not fear Schelmer."

"Give her up! Never. I'd sooner blow her up, powder and all. What chance has a poor beggar like me against a scoundrel who is the lion of all Alexandria—a man who could pave his house with gold?"

"I tell you there is no fear of Schelmer."

"But there is great fear."

"No fear, I tell you, you obstinate fellow. None in the world. Since the night we went to Athenea's house my men have been tracking out the ways of these two Germans. We find them to be swindlers, of bad antecedents. They had a central house in Vienna, where Schelmer committed forgeries, for which he was imprisoned. Gulheim is merely his accomplice and lure. We also find that Schelmer is engaged to no less than six young ladies of Alexandria, and hitherto he has kept his secret wonderfully. Leave it to me, and I'll expose them in such a way that they'll never dare to show their faces in Alexandria again. But mind, Hagan, only on condition that you bring back Athenea. If you fail to do so Athenea's character will be lost; and you will be either imprisoned or banished. Come, rouse your better self. Take her back."

"Bedad, and so I will," said Hagan, rising with a groan, and shaking my hand with his bear-like grip. "But blow Schelmer to blazes in the name of all that is holy. How will you do it?"

"Hagan, my friend," said I, "that is my secret. You are a brave, honest fellow, I admit; but you are of a communicative and confiding disposition, and that doesn't suit the business of my profession, so brush up your dress-coat, and wait and see."

I let matters well alone for a fortnight. In the meantime, to judge by appearances, the banking firm of Schelmer and Gulheim flourished like a green bay-tree. Schelmer furnished a new house in a tremendous style, the street close to my office was for days blocked up with huge pier-glasses, pianofortes, bales of carpet, costly curtains, carved Indian furniture, books, plate, and pictures. His cadaverous face was to be seen at all hours, superintending the moving of Buhl cabinets and packages of old china. Tropical flowers arrived in vast wicker cases; his new stables were filled with horses; he skimmed about the city in a handsome phaeton drawn by two cream-coloured ponies—the present of the Viceroy, as everybody said, though I knew that they were had on credit from a newly-established Hungarian dealer. I often, as I passed, went up and spoke to my man or his sneaking little parasite, Gulheim, and he held forth to me on the expensive ways of Alexandria, and the greediness and fraudulency of the whole population.

"A greater set of rascals I never knew," he said once, "and I treat them accordingly; and yet they come round me, licking my boots and praying for more orders, and, as money is of no consequence to me, I give them more. Sacred thunder, I don't think there is an honest man in all Alexandria!"

I gave him a quiet look and suggested M. Louis Bonnival, a French merchant, and one of his probable fathers-in-law, as every one said.

He shook his head, screwed up his eyes, and twisted his dyed moustache.

"Ali Ben Sulieman?" (Athenea's father.)

"Would sell his own father."

"M. Regnauld?" another father-in-law.

"Bad—notorious. Drummed out of the Algerine army."

"M. Donnerwetter?" another future father-in-law.

"You're joking. What, marry a butter-tub?"

"Mr. John Blizard?" the fifth father-in-law.

He only bit his under lip.

"Well, then, M. Castiglione?" the sixth of the fathers-in-law in futuro.

He made no reply for a moment, then he gave me a keen look from his furtive eyes, and drew me on one side to a doorway, quite apart from the workmen. "I see," said he, "you know more about me than most men do. You are probably inclined to be troublesome, like most of your craft, unless you can get more by keeping quiet. Leave me alone to work out my own business plans in my own way, and I will give you five hundred pounds English money the day of my marriage with——."

"Athenea Ben Sulieman? Miss Lucy Blizard? Madlle Louise Regnauld? Fräulein Marie Donnerwetter? or——?"

"Tut! Never you mind, whichever lady I select—voilà."

"I will think over it," I said to myself quietly, without betraying my disgust; "but you must promise to come and dine with me on Monday next, to meet a few friends, and, after dinner, we'll get in a corner and settle matters."

"C'est un vrai bonhomme," said Schelmer, slapping me in a friendly way on the back, "and open to reason. Good, mon ami, we understand each other. Au revoir."

The game was now approaching the last deal. Schelmer had kept the secret very carefully between his six fathers-in-law, and their money kept his bank going. Hagan, at my urging, had brought back Athenea without reproach, having placed her in the care of the sentinel's mother the first moment he could smuggle her unnoticed out of that dangerous repository, the powder magazine; and the parents were now pressing forward the speedy marriage with Schelmer. If he bolted at all, he must bolt soon; this I felt; and then the six fathers-in-law would be after him in full cry. I determined to accelerate this pleasant crisis, and I did so, with what result will be seen.

The Monday came, and the mine was ready for springing. I had invited the élite of the business world of Alexandria. The six fathers-in-law were all coming, and with them the six mothers-in-law and the brides elect. So carefully had Schelmer managed his courtships, that I felt convinced that not one of the fathers-in-law supposed the other love affairs had gone beyond harmless flirtations. Schelmer mixed largely in society, and was as often at one house as another. I smiled to think how little he knew the bitter pill I had ready for him.

Ten or twenty guests, including the six fathers-in-law, had arrived before Schelmer came, and I managed to lead off the six fathers-in-law into an inner drawing-room, where I had placed several of my choicest pictures, about which I professed to want their opinions. I had just bottled them safely off in this apartment when I heard the servant at the door shout forth the name of M. Schelmer. I received him with enthusiasm, which he reciprocated. He was a sallow German Jew, tall, thin, and not ill-made, though rather "weedy." He was dressed in the height of the fashion. His coarse black hair was elaborately curled, and his moustaches were twirled into keener points than usual. He wore the decoration of the legion of honour in his button-hole; his boots shone like mirrors; his long yellow fingers were covered with rings, that seemed to glitter more than your ordinary jewels; and an odour of some strange oriental perfume preceded and followed him. On his lips there sat a sweet but artificial smile; in his weazel eyes brooded a sarcastic cunning. He gently touched a tuberose in his button-hole as he darted forward every moment to shake hands with some one, and his false teeth looked larger, whiter, and more shark-like than ever as he chatted for a moment with Athenea, and then skimmed off to whisper compliments to Mdlle. Regnauld or Fräulein Donnerwetter, who were watching his career with eyes of pride, delight, and triumph.

I touched him on his shoulder as he floated about like a great purple butterfly over a tulip bed, and asked him to come and see some sketches by Descamps that I had just bought. He professed to be a connoisseur, and said he should be delighted. We passed to the inner drawing-room, and I threw open the door. There were the six fathers-in-law, an oddly contrasted set of old fogies. M. Bonnival, fat and round like a mandarin, and bald as a badger; M. Regnauld, a tall, crane-like old soldier, with long, drooping, white moustaches; Herr Donnerwetter, a German, with red face, staring eyes, and stubbly black hair; Ali Ben Sulieman, a grave Arab, in turban and oriental appliances; and Mr. John Blizard, a sturdy, broad-chested Englishman, with a frank, jovial manner and countryfied dress. There was shaking of hands all round, and a round of local jokes and hearty laughter; even Ali Ben Sulieman laughed till his turban fell off. Schelmer glided in among them, and, wherever he came, there the fun broke out afresh, and every one patted him on the back and lionised him as the very pet and flower of Alexandrian society. I took advantage of a lull in the conversation, and the crowding round a special gem of the modern Italian school, to set light to the train.

"Gentlemen," I said, pointing to M. Schelmer, "you perhaps do not know the object of the dinner-party to which I have had this day the pleasure of inviting you? I have asked you to come to congratulate my dear friend here," and I touched Schelmer on the shoulder; he was getting perceptibly paler, "our great banker and financial genius, on his approaching marriage with Mademoiselle Louise Regnauld on the 10th."

"Stuff!" said Blizard, flying up; "he marries my daughter Bessy on the 11th!"

"Donner and Blitzen!" stormed Donnerwetter, "why, he marries my beautiful Gretchen on Tuesday week!"

"By the head of the Prophet," said Ali Ben Sulieman, gravely, "he has been engaged to my daughter Athenea these two months!"

So in succession stormed and raved the six indignant fathers-in-law, while Schelmer stood there, mute and paralysed, in the sudden storm that had fallen upon his head.

"You shall fight me, sir, at once, coquin," spluttered M. Regnauld "Come, send for swords——"

"I draw out all my money to-morrow—all," shouted Donnerwetter.

"Breach of promise, you swindler," swore Blizard, shaking his fist in Schelmer's malign eyes. "Breach of promise!" screamed everybody.

"Rogue!" "Thief!" "Villain," "Vaurien!" "kick him out"—such were the cries that filled the air. Angry hands made grabs at his collar. Some kicked him; some pulled him one way, some another.

I pressed the crowd back. "Gentlemen," I said, "no violence; perhaps the man carries arms." This quieted them, and they fell back. "I can relieve your minds by assuring you that a severer punishment than you could inflict will soon fall on this man. I have an order for his arrest from Vienna in my pocket, and I have it endorsed with the Viceroy's consent; but first let us show the picaroon to his six mothers-in-law.

Schelmer had hitherto stood a picture of degraded cowardice: his arms hanging by his sides, his lower lip quivering convulsively; but now an intense horror seemed to dilate his eyes and raise his hair. With a scream of madness, and tossing his arms, he burst from us, and, with half a sleeve torn from his coat by Blizard, he rushed down the corridor and precipitated himself from a low balcony that overhung the garden.

With a wild cry of revenge the six fathers-in-law—tall, short, fat, and lean—followed his heels in hot pursuit, but in vain. He had effected his escape, and, luckily for him, he and Gulheim reached a Beyrout steamer, just getting her steam up, in the bay, and so got clear of their Alexandrian enemies.

My resolution was soon made up. I knew Schelmer had not money to get far. I had posters printed directly—in three languages, Arabic, French, and English—in which I offered one hundred pounds reward for the apprehension of Schelmer, who, I said, had been guilty of several murders and many other crimes. I then described minutely his personal appearance, and ended, "By command of the Viceroy."

It sounded like a falsehood, I allow, to say that Schelmer had committed murder; but indirectly he had, for I believe that many a widow and orphan died from the misery and starvation the stopping of that fraudulent bank soon caused.

I knew those posters would soon unearth him, and they did.

I was off to Beyrout by the next boat, and two hours after my bills had been posted up, as I was on my way to the French consul, I was astonished to find a crowd in the street, dragging along some unfortunate wretch. I pressed through the mob, and, to my delight, found one of my men. It was Schelmer. They had a halter already round his neck, and one side of his face was bleeding; for the barber who had been shaving off his whiskers, to prevent his being recognised, had been frightened by the arrival of the mob, and had removed only one whisker, and had cut Schelmer's cheek in doing that. There he was, forlorn and stunned, with one whisker on and the other off, looking a most deplorable object. I threw away the rope, silenced the shouting men and boys by insisting on his first having a trial. I then took him to the French consul's, where I got an order enabling me to send him to the local prison. I had bagged one rogue, and now I wanted the other.

I found the other at last, still on board the steamer. The animal was snug in bed in his cabin reading a novel, and with a bottle of port wine by his side. The moment I told him my name, produced the handcuffs, and ordered him to get up and go on shore with me to the Prussian consul, the French captain and the officers, cried out and protested against the violation of hospitality and the insult offered to the French flag. I had to address the angry crew. I told them that I had not come to insult any flag, but to arrest a man who had stolen the savings of the widow and the orphan. I was sure that they would not lend their flag to conceal such a villain; and then, to prove that I had the sanction of their own consul, I called the janissary of the French consulate, who deposed to the authenticity of my mission. This quite satisfied my opponents; the captain asked me to take wine; and I returned on shore and handed over the thief to his consul.

On my way back from the cage in which I had locked my two birds, I met my friend Hagan, tired and dispirited. He was looking for me. He would not at first believe my success, and when we returned to the prison, borrowed a lanthorn of a Turk to go in and look at my capture. He spoke to them and was satisfied. He returned in raptures, and declared that such a capture had never been so successfully effected. After spending two or three days at Beyrout very agreeably, I determined to return, and on my way to make these thieves an example for the good of others. A singular idea struck me. The dragoman of the English consulate had a big white Syrian bear, of which he was afraid, and glad to get rid of. I gave him two pounds ten shillings—half as much as he asked—and determined to chain my prisoners to this rough watchman. Not having a swivel chain, I sent for a blacksmith, who came and cautiously measured the bear. The man made me a strong collar, with rings on both sides, to which I attached chains twenty feet long, which I fastened to the prisoners' handcuffs. I had taken deck passages for the gentlemen, who had come to Beyrout with diamond rings on and first-class. Then I fastened them each with his right hand by a chain to the bear. The rascals could only sleep by turns, for fear of their watchman, and every time he moved one way the man farther off had to pull him the other way. Sometimes in the night I could hear the off man say, "The bear is up, look out!" They found the passage quite long enough before we arrived in Alexandria.

The news of the capture had reached the city before us, and I found the populace aware of my success. The moment we entered the harbour and the name of the vessel had gone up on the Rassakhan signal-staff, a vast crowd poured down to welcome me. The city had hardly ever known such a commotion. Most of the people were glad, but some of the swindlers' accomplices were afraid of the confessions they might make and the secrets they might disclose. Every one, pleased or not, wanted to see the two men chained to the bear. Not a door or window, from the Custom House to the Great Square, but was crowded with friends or foes of Schelmer and Gulheim. The Arab rabble screamed and shouted at the discomfiture of the wretches who had robbed the widows and orphans. The delight at the defeat of the impostors was great and irrepressible. The French and Prussian consuls claimed their precious subjects, and the mock trial soon took place, Gulheim being sentenced to eighteen months', and Schelmer to five years' imprisonment. They, however, still had money, and brought such influence to bear, that in a few months, somehow or other, the imprisonment was commuted to simple banishment. My friend Hagan was made happy with his Athenea. In what way the other five would-be fathers-in-law disposed of their daughters I do not know.

A KITCHEN FOR THE SICK.

When poor patients are discharged from hospital, cured, but sickly—purged of assailable disease, but feeble from its ravages, impoverished in muscle and energy (which mean working power) by the long conflict and wasteful throe and prostration—what they want are the two supreme essentials of good "lying-by" a bit, and good feeding. What they want (putting it in other words) is a gradual acquaintance with their old foregone labour, not a sudden resumption of the full burthen of it; and a diet that shall be somewhat more suitable to a returning (and exacting) digestion than dried haddocks, bread and dripping, "pennywinks," bacon-rashers, eel-pies, cheese, liver, and cocoa-nut. Do they get it? Can they hope, when the doors of the hospital swing back upon their hinges behind them, and they pass totteringly, and nervous and unused, into the open air, that a sunny corner of a quiet room awaits them, that they will be snared into appetite and relish by the light pudding temptingly arranged, by the savoury cup with its dice of toast, by the juicy cut from the best-found territory of the hot and sapful joint? Alas! The answer is so contradictory of the question, that the very question jars. We know what the poor have; their void, their tastelessness, their unquiet, their squalor. To look on this picture and on this, suffices. There is no need to duplicate the illustrations.

Happily, however, this great and glaring want has been felt; and divers benign institutions have sprung up, that carry as many of the poor as they reach over this bridge, or borderland, separating wan infirmity from robust and rosy vigour. Now, not one among them, surely, can do its kind work more tenderly, or more effectually, than a little modest establishment in Market-street, in the close vicinity of St. Mary's Hospital. "St. Mary's Kitchen," this real Maison-Dieu has chosen for its modest name; its yearly income is four hundred pounds; it stands, one of a row of little black-built houses, in the very midst of the poor who are its beneficiaires; its staff consists of two kindly women; it gives away annually—mark it—ten thousand dinners.

Taking the ten thousand, and dividing it by three hundred (the round number of available days; for Sundays and holidays are excluded), there are as many as thirty-three dinners, on the average, given away daily; as many as thirty-three invalids comforted; as many as thirty-three patients advanced, that certain so much, on the road to restored cheerfulness and helpful labour. Encountering the fatigue of another little sum, too, and taking four hundred pounds, the total annual expenditure, to divide it by the same three hundred days, the result is shown that the gross cost, daily, of these thirty-three dinners is twenty-six shillings and eightpence; is, in another form, a little under tenpence for each individual gift or feeding. One more fact may be borne in mind, also. The machinery of St. Mary's Kitchen, comprising the house, the implements, the firing, the organisation, the two kindly women, could just as easily give away seventy dinners daily as thirty-three; is only longing to give away seventy dinners instead of thirty-three; has given away seventy, on some rare golden days, cheerily. Only one item of expenditure would have to be increased by this largely increased good-doing. Naturally, it is that of Provisions. Two hundred and thirty-nine pounds (with a very exact one shilling and elevenpence three farthings over) is the sum spent in feeding ten thousand; doubling this (thirty-three being nearly enough the half of seventy), four hundred and seventy pounds would be required for the larger work; and, having this, the cost of each meal would come out then, roundly, at sevenpence halfpenny instead of tenpence, or at a saving of twenty-five per cent. Would not that be a charming legerdemain of economy? A most delightful Abracadabra pronounced over fifteen silver shillings, enabling them to do the pious work of twenty? It would seem so; whilst figures prove facts, and whilst facts are all the surer for the figures that so neatly prove them.

The word "dinners" has been used to notify St. Mary's Kitchen's daily gift. It is possibly a misnomer; for there is no niggardliness with the hands that fill the jugs and basins that are daily taken there. They give a pint of ruddy beef-tea, or of paler mutton-broth, to every adult presented; they give three parts of a pint to every child; and it must be a pretty convalescent who would get through a pint measure at a sitting, due attention being given, also, to the couple of thick slices of bread that accompany it. Remembering the satisfactoriness of a breakfast-cupful of good toneful liquid, solidified as before-mentioned, it is more natural to suppose the pint would do for dinner and supper both; thus giving the patient the knowledge of something coming for the flagging evening hours, as well as the solace of that most comfortable mid-day meal. This gives another aspect to the expenditure of tenpence, which, at first sight, might seem a high charge for one invalid's dinner; but considering, also, that the food is ready, is hot, is exquisitely clean, contains as much nourishment as food can contain, and is obtainable with no effort beyond the errand for the invalid's friends, the tenpence is quite comprehensible, the affair becomes a marvel of judicious economy as well as a charity, and is, by so much the more, deserving of every commendation.

The good deeds of St. Mary's Kitchen are not confined to preparing mutton-broth and beef-tea. These are the occupations of every Tuesday and Friday; on every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday, the two kindly women roast rich, bounteous, juicy legs of mutton, and every day in the week they bake appetising rice-puddings. A whole pudding is given (it measures eight inches by five, perhaps; and is half a finger deep), when pudding is the gift ordered; when the patient's certificate is marked "meat," a quarter of a pound (after waste by cooking) is given to each adult, three ounces to each child. Potatoes are added, also, with the meat, in place of bread; and this scheme is adhered to, except for the few weeks in early summer, when the old potatoes are not good to cook, and when the new ones are known to be injurious to an invalid's digestion. All these materials mentioned are of the best; the cooking is of the best; a royal patient could have neither one jot better; and this any inquirer may ascertain for himself, on simple presentation at the humble house, any day at noon. He will find no credentials necessary; no introduction. He need not even knock for the door to be opened. He will find it as wide as its small dimensions will allow; he will see some clean wooden kitchen-stairs before him; guided by the delicious odour, he may descend these; he will be hospitably welcomed (for all of the edibles will be presented for his tasting); he may seat himself, and see the whole of the small ceremony of distribution.

This last is small, indeed. In the bigger of the two kitchens (the front one) are the matron and the cook; pleasant, sympathetic women, both; and forming, as has been said, the entire establishment. Before her book at the table, the matron sits; the cook, for obvious reasons, stands. In front of the cook is a wall-table; and over this, like the pay-place of a very agreeable railway booking-office, is a square cut in the wall; it is through this that the distribution takes place, and there is not an atom of parade more. The invalid's messenger, standing in the back kitchen, presents the ticket to the cook; the cook reads aloud the name; the matron looks down her book to see which gift is to be given; the cook gives it; the messenger takes it; and the thing is done.

"I've had all me share, dear," cried a tall battered Irishwoman, the day these particulars were ascertained. "Here's the ticket from the dhoctor, dear, for six more."

The matron carefully ran her finger along the list. "No," she said, "you have one yet. You needn't bring this till to-morrow."

"Eh, dear? Whaat is it ye tell me?"

"You can have one more off your old paper," was the matron's kindly-slow explanation. "And then bring this again."

"Whaat? Haven't I had my six, then? Is that what ye mane, dear?"

That was it. She had omitted to come one day; and, in an Irish bullish sort of manner, having missed one dinner, had one dinner still to get. Radiance tried to get the better of the puzzled look on her face, but it was a pretty equal battle. It was a marvellously characteristic incident, too. Poor Patricia couldn't count six; poor Patricia had let a dinner-time go by, and never knew it; poor Patricia had so much dense trust, she relied upon the Saxon implicitly; had so little hardihood and greed, she could have been robbed, and would never have awakened to the indignant discovery.

Another old woman presented herself. She was tall, too; gaunt, grey, gigantic-featured. Are those hideous, bony, column-like faces ever found among the cultured and the rich? Does not grace soften them? Does not a little ornamentation veil out that expression that is so weird and scared? Whilst the questions flashed into the mind, the old woman said her word.

"What shall I bring to-morrow?" it was; with no capability to forecast; with no power to reckon, "Tuesday, broth; Wednesday, mutton; a jug, therefore, for the first-named day, a basin for the second."

With no hearing, either, as it proved; or much of it. "It's meat, to-morrow," the cook answered. "Bring a basin."

"E—e—e—eh?" With such blankness; with such dulness; with such stony hardness of ear, and eye, and head, and everything.

The cook was reduced to pantomime. She held up a handy basin.

"O—o—o—oh. Thank'e."

Alas! But does not food mean brains as well as muscle? Does not food mean the power to think, to wrestle, to dive deep, to comprehend? A fire, fed with cinder, ash, rag, rubbish, and at some moments expiring almost because it is fed too sparingly even with these, can it burn so brightly as that in the polished grate, in which is heaped, periodically, with no neglect ever, the best-tried and most worthy coal? From cause, consequence, surely; from the seed, the fruit. Given the one thing, there can be no avoidance ever of the other; and had this old creature ever known a cast of comely fuel, ever been encouraged that way, to generous and ruddy flame?

Down the stairs with difficulty came a pale, poulticed, lame young man. A rice-pudding was his consignment; and he toiled with it up the stairs again to the clean back-parlour, where were plain wooden forms and tables for the accommodation of those receivers who happened to be the invalids themselves, and who need not therefore carry the food home. Could there be too fervent a grace said over that hot and nutritious meal? Well, it was all left to the heart and the conscience of that young man, at any rate. If he felt gratitude, his soul was the better for it; if he did not feel gratitude, there was no one to order that he should make a pretence of it, and compel him to join in some recognised outward form. And in this very thing is a most wholesome and healthy feature of St. Mary's Kitchen. No creed entitles; no creed deters. Membership with no church brings favour or priority; failure of membership with any church whatever is neither frowned at, deprecated, or (as an essential), even known. Part of the matron's duties is to visit the invalids (it is a check upon imposture, as well as a road to more alms, if more alms should be required); if, out of the fervour of her own nature, she should allude to a text or a communion, it is a personal matter, from heart to heart, and has no record or recognition elsewhere. Is the patient wanting the nourishment the good kitchen has to give? In that is the sole prerogative and eligibility of any living being. Obviously, there are only certain avenues up which the kitchen can be approached. It does not face south, north-east, west, with doors everywhere, and ingress even through the roof. If it had this universal availability, it would be very glad; but as long as meals mean money, and money has to be asked for of subscribers, St. Mary's Kitchen has to content itself with three entrances, these being found at the broad gates of St. Mary's Hospital; of the Western General Dispensary; and of St. Mary's Dispensary for Women and Children. Let a person once be on the sick-list of one of those—be it for fever; for accident; for thorough break-down; for anything other than well-established chronic disease; and that one crucial question that has been referred to, is the only one that has ever to be put. It is put, too, by the persons most competent to judge, the medical officers of the institutions; for they have watched the cases from rise to crisis, from crisis to cure, and none know so well whether the body is fitly nourished, whether the exact time has come when convalescence can be promoted by the gift of a few good meals. Since chronic cases are necessarily excluded (for the kitchen is established to give the right food at the right period to such poor folk as can be cured, not to keep alive those other folk who must go on distempered to the end), there is naturally a limit to the number of meals to be given to each case. One order lasts for a week, giving six dinners; that may be renewed three times, making four weeks in all, or twenty-four dinners; and there it ends. In some very rare cases, where prostration is very great, where the patient is very poor, where a flat drop back into a relapse would be the obvious result of a withdrawal, twelve more meals, covering a fortnight, have been granted; but the doctors are seldom driven to this, and, as a rule, have the happiness of seeing substantial benefit from the handsome gift ordinarily in their power. They send a slip of paper, the size of a banker's cheque, to the matron, with the name and address of the patient, the complaint suffered from, and whether it is infectious. The matron gives a ticket in return, only requiring to know before six o'clock one day what dinners will be required the next, and the thing goes regularly and methodically on. The matron's tickets, all of one size and fashion, take their value from their colour. A yellow ticket means six dinners, all of broth, beef-tea, or pudding (according to medical order); no meat. A blue ticket means six dinners—four of broth, beef-tea, or pudding; two of meat. A pink ticket increases the meat to four, and only leaves two meals of the less solid sort. A hand grasping a pink ticket must be a very happy hand, it would be safe to say; a hand giving in the last pink ticket for the last time must be somewhat sad and regretful, albeit strength may be coming back, and health be once more felt as about to be tingling in the veins. A recommendation to mercy, surely, for the culprit found guilty of clinging on St. Mary's Kitchen to the extreme limit; of even being greedy of a week or two more.

The incident (precisely opposite to this) of the old Irishwoman over-counting her dinners, caused a question as to whether this had ever happened before.

"Well," the matron answered, "we reckon on one dinner being missed every day. Supposing fifty have been ordered, it's pretty sure that only forty-nine will come. Something happens for sure that will prevent some one of them."

Most odd. But, on consideration, the patients could not all come for themselves; they were lame, ulcered, weak, stiff; they were children, possibly, far too young; and there was the chance of the people who were to have come for them being too much occupied, or being called suddenly away. No doubt a feast of poor has its risks of absentees as much as a feast of rich. That point was cleared. But there was another.

"As a rule, do you find the people grateful?"

"Oh, very." The matron was quite sure about it. "During all the eleven years we have been here," she added, "I only remember one complaint; and that was a man last Christmas, because we were closed on Christmas Day, a Friday, and the next day, because it was Bank Holiday. 'What!' the man cried, 'am I to go without a dinner from Thursday to Monday because you're shut up! And I with nothing in the house, too! Don't you know we've got Hospital Saturday now, and that we subscribe to it?'"

That man was a bad type of a bad class. He meant that he had a right to the kind charity; that he was no suppliant; but rather that he could demand St. Mary's dinners. And this with Hospital Saturday once established (only once; a few weeks before had been the first celebration of it), and with his own gift to it possibly nothing, and possibly, at the most, a few chary coppers! How striking a characteristic of bad human nature it is to find the plea set up, that because a little has been done, there is title to the whole; that because an army is marching valiantly on to victory, the meanest loiterers are to share the proceeds, and wear equal leaves of laurel! It is such men as this who steel up the heart and barricade the approaches to it. It is better to remember that his was but one instance in an experience of eleven years, and that the matron bore generous testimony to the meekness, order, and deep gratitude of the thousands who were brought under her notice.

"Sometimes," she said, smiling at the memory, "we have had Roman Catholics refuse the broth or beef-tea ordered for them on Fridays, because it was against their religion to take it. They have gone without rather than disobey. It is true, a few have taken it, and have said, 'Why should I care for the priest? The priest gives nothing to me;' but, as a rule, the Catholics are no disturbance to us, and often set quite an example to the rest."

"We roast only legs of mutton," the matron further said, in answer to a few general inquiries to conclude. "Never beef, and never any other joint. We find legs the most economical; and they give the nicest slices. From the bones, and from a sheep's head to help, we get our broth. We thicken that with barley-meal sometimes, and just a little onion; but in the beef-tea there is nothing but beef, not even salt; for patients might have cancer on the lip, or something of that sort, and salt would hurt. Everybody, you see, would have salt at home; and you can always add, but you cannot take away."

Was it not true philosophy, this item last set down?

"Well, and that dear old black dog there, standing in the yard—who is he?"

"Ah, he?" and the matron's face looked towards the animal as one might look to a pet child, "he is our daily customer. He never fails."

"And does he bring a certificate from the doctor?"

"No, no; but he is here always. He used at first to stand in the passage from the door upstairs; but the patients brushed by him and disturbed him, and now he always stands in the yard, where you see him, and where the patients never have to go. Poor fellow! If we've nothing for him, he'll wait about in the streets till three or four o'clock."

The picture is complete, with this canine admirer of St. Mary's Kitchen in the background. There is no need to say any more, except, perhaps, that there is one item of the year's disbursements that might be sponged wholly away. It is that of sixteen pounds fifteen shillings for percentage to the collector. Now, if the subscribers would send their money in, and not wait to be asked for it, every one of these three hundred and thirty-five shillings would be saved. They would give, too, even at the rate of tenpence a dinner, some four hundred dinners extra annually; and the poorest financier must see the value of so much forethought.

At all events, let every reader of ALL THE YEAR ROUND who may be induced to help St. Mary's Kitchen bear this last fact well in mind.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"WELL, you may say as you please, Mr. Jackson, but 'twas a sight I shall never forget; and one I don't expect to see the like of on this side eternity," said Richard Gibbs.

"No, nor don't wish to, I should think," put in Seth Maxfield.

"Anyway, it was a wonderful manifestation," remarked Mr. Gladwish, musingly.

There was a little knot of Wesleyans assembled in the house of Mr. Gladwish, the shoemaker. Since Jonathan Maxfield's defection, he might be considered the leading member of the Methodist congregation. And a weekly prayer-meeting was held at his house on Monday evenings, as it had formerly been held in old Max's back parlour.

On the present occasion the assembly was more numerous than usual. Besides the accustomed cronies and Mr. Jackson the preacher, there were also Seth Maxfield, who had come into Whitford on some farm business on the previous Saturday, Richard Gibbs, and the widow Thimbleby. The latter was an old acquaintance of Mrs. Gladwish, and much patronised by that matron; although, of late, Mrs. Thimbleby had been under some cloud of displeasure among the stricter Methodists, on account of her fidelity to David Powell.

There had not been, to say the truth, any very fervent or lengthy religious exercises that evening. After a brief discourse by Brother Jackson, and the singing of a hymn, the company had, by mutual agreement, understood but not expressed, fallen into a discussion of the topic which was at that time in the minds and mouths of most Whitford persons high and low—namely, David Powell's preachings, and the phenomena attendant thereon.

"Anyhow," repeated Mr. Gladwish, after a short silence, "it was a wonderful manifestation."

"You may well say so, sir," assented Richard Gibbs, emphatically.

"Humph," grunted out Brother Jackson, pursing up his thick lips and folding his fat hands before him; "I misdoubt whether the enemy be not mixed up somehow or other with these manifestations. I don't say they are wholly his doing. But—— my brethren, Satan is very wily; and is continually 'going to and fro in the earth,' and 'walking up and down in it,' even as in the days of Job."

"That's very true," said Mrs. Gladwish, with an air of responsible corroboration. She was a light-haired, pale-faced woman, with a slatternly figure and a sharp, inquisitive nose; and her quiet persistency in cross-questioning made her a little formidable to some of her neighbours.

"When I see a thorn-tree bring forth figs, or a thistle grapes, I will believe that such things as I witnessed yesterday on Whit-meadow are the work of Satan—not before!" rejoined Gibbs.

"Amen!" said Mrs. Thimbleby, tremulously. "Oh! indeed, sir—I hope you don't consider it presumption in me—but I must say I do think Mr. Gibbs is right. It was the working of the Lord's spirit, and no other."

"What was the working of the Lord's spirit?" asked a harsh voice that made the women start, and caused every head in the room to be turned towards the door. There stood Jonathan Maxfield, rather more bowed in the shoulders than when we first made his acquaintance, but otherwise little changed.

He was welcomed by Gladwish with a marked show of respect. The breach made between old Max and his former associates by his departure from the Methodist Society had been soon healed in many instances. Gladwish had condoned it long ago; and, owing to various circumstances—among them the fact that Seth Maxfield and his wife remained among the Wesleyans—the intercourse between the two families had been almost uninterrupted. There was truly no cordial interchange of hospitalities, nor much that could be called companionship; but the strong bond of habit on both sides, and, on Gladwish's, the sense of his neighbour's growing wealth and importance, served to keep the two men as close together as they ever had been.

"I've come to say a word to Seth, if it may be without putting you out," said old Maxfield, with a sidelong nod of the head, that was intended as a general salute to the company.

Mr. and Mrs. Gladwish protested that no one would be in the least put out by Mr. Maxfield's presence, but that they were all, on the contrary, pleased to see him. Then, while the father and son said a few words to each other in a low tone, the others conversed among themselves rather loudly, by way of politely expressing that they did not wish to overhear any private conversation.

"That's all, then, Seth," said old Max, turning away from his son. "I knew I should find you here, and I thought I would mention about them freeholds before it slipped my memory. And—life is uncertain—I have put a clause in my will about 'em this very evening. Putting off has never been my plan, neither with the affairs of this world or the next."

There was something in the mention of a clause in old Max's will which had a powerful attraction for the imagination of most persons present. Brother Jackson made a motion with his mouth, as though he were tasting some pleasant savour. Mrs. Gladwish thought of her tribe of growing children, and their rapid consumption of food, clothing, and doctor's stuff, and she sighed. Two or three of the regular attendants at the prayer-meeting fixed their eyes with lively interest on Jonathan Maxfield; and one whispered to another that Seth had gotten a good bit o' cash with his wife, and would have more from his father; 'twas always the way. Money makes money. Though, rightly considered, it was but dross and dust, and riches were an awful snare. And then they obsequiously made way for the rich grocer to take a seat in their circle, moved, perhaps, by compassion for the imminent peril to his soul which he was incurring from the possession of freehold property.

"Well, I'll sit down for half an hour," said Jonathan, in his dry way, and took a chair near the table accordingly. In fact, he was well pleased enough to find himself once more among his old associates, and if any embarrassment belonged to the relations between himself and Brother Jackson, his former pastor, it was certain that old Max did not feel it. When a man has a profound conviction of his own wisdom, supported on a firm basis of banker's books and solid investments, such intangible sentimentalities have no power to constrain him. Mr. Jackson, perhaps, felt some little difficulty in becomingly adjusting his manner to the situation, being troubled between the desire of asserting his dignity in the eyes of his flock and his natural reluctance to affront a man of Jonathan Maxfield's weight in the world. But he speedily hit on the assumption of an unctuous charity and toleration, as being the kind of demeanour best calculated for the circumstances. And perhaps he did not judge amiss. "I'm sure," said he, with a pious smile, "it is a real joy to the hearts of the faithful, and a good example to the unregenerate, to see believers dwelling together in unity, however much they may be compelled to differ on some points, for conscience' sake."

"What was it as some one was saying just now about the working of the Lord's spirit?" asked Maxfield, cutting short Brother Jackson's verbal flow of milk and honey.

There was a little hesitation among those present, as to who should answer this question. To answer it involved the utterance of a name which was known to be unpleasing in Mr. Maxfield's ears. Mrs. Thimbleby shrank into the background; she had a special dread of old Jonathan's stern hard face and manner. Richard Gibbs at length answered, simply, "We were speaking, Mr. Maxfield, of David Powell's preaching in Lady-lane and on Whit-meadow."

Maxfield pressed his lips together, and made an inarticulate sound, which might be taken to express contempt or disapprobation, or merely an acknowledgment of Gibbs's information.

"My! I should like to have been there!" exclaimed Mrs. Gladwish.

"Well, now," said Seth Maxfield, "my wife would walk twenty mile to keep out of the way of it. She was quite scared at all the accounts we heard."

"But what did you hear? And what did happen, after all?" asked Mrs. Gladwish. "I wish you would give us an account of it, Mr. Gibbs."

"It is hard to give an account of such things to them as wasn't present, ma'am. But there was a great outpouring of grace."

Brother Jackson groaned slightly, then coughed, and shook his head.

"I never saw such a beautiful evening for the time of year," put in one of Gladwish's apprentices, a consumptive-looking lad with bright, dreamy eyes. "And all the folks standing in the sunset, and the river shining, and the leaves red and yellow on the branches—it was a wonderful sight!"

"It was a wonderful sight!" ejaculated Gibbs. "There was the biggest multitude I ever saw assembled in Whitmeadow. There must have been thousands of people. There were among them scoffers, and ungodly men, and seekers after the truth, and some that were already awakened. Then, women and children; they came gathering together more and more, from the north, and the south, and the east, and the west. And there, in the midst, raised up on a high bench, so that he might be seen of all, stood David Powell. His face was as white as snow, and his black hair hung down on either side of it."

"I thought of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness," said the apprentice softly.

"I couldn't get to stand very near to him," continued Gibbs, "and I thought I should catch but little of his discourse. But when he began to speak, though his voice was low at first, after a while it rose, and grew every moment fuller and stronger."

"Yes," said the bright-eyed apprentice, "it was like listening to the organ-pipes of St. Chad's; just that kind of tremble in it that seems to run all through your body."

"The man always had a goodish voice," said Brother Jackson. "But that is a carnal gift. 'Tis the use we put our voices to that is all-important, my dear friends."

"He began by prayer," said Gibbs, speaking slowly, and with the abstracted air of a man who is not so much endeavouring to give others a vivid narration, as to recall accurately to his own mind the things of which he is speaking. "Yes, he began with prayer. He prayed for us all there present with wonderful fervour."

"What did he say?" asked Mrs. Gladwish.

"Nay, I cannot repeat the exact words."

"Can't you remember, Joel?" persisted his mistress, addressing the young apprentice.

The lad blushed up, but more, apparently, from eagerness and excitement than bashfulness, as he answered, "Not the very words, ma'am, I can't remember. But it was a prayer that had wings like, and it lifted you up right away into the heavens. When he left off, I felt as if I had been dropped straight down on to Whit-meadow out of a cloud of glory."

"Well, there's no harm in all that, Brother Jackson?" said Gladwish, looking round.

"Harm!" echoed Gibbs. "Why, Mr. Gladwish, if you could but have seen the faces of the people! And then presently he began to call sinners to repentance with such power as I never witnessed—no, not when he was preaching in our chapel two years ago. He spoke of wrath and judgment, until the whole field was full of the sound of crying and groaning. But he seemed continually strengthened, and went on, until first one fell, and then another. They dropped down, just like dead, when the arrows of conviction entered their souls. And the cries of some of them were awful to hear. Then there was weeping, and a kind of hard breathing and panting from breasts oppressed with the weight of sin; and then, mixed with those sounds, the rejoicing aloud of believers, and those who received assurance. But through all the preacher's voice rose above the tumult, and it seemed to me almost a manifest miracle that he should be able to make himself heard so clearly."

"Aye," said Joel, "it was like a ship on the top of the stormy waves; now high, now low, but always above the raging waters."

There was a short silence. Those present looked first at each other and then at old Max, who sat motionless and grim, with his elbow on the table, and his chin resting on his clenched hand.

"And did you really see any of the poor creeturs as was took?" asked Mrs. Gladwish of the widow Thimbleby.

"Took, ma'am?"

"Took with fits, or whatever it was."

"Oh! yes; I see several. There was a fine fresh-coloured young man, which is a butcher out Duckwell way—Mr. Seth 'll likely know him—and he dropped down just like a bullock. And then he stamped, and struggled, and grew an awful dark red colour in the face, and tore up the grass with his hands; such was the power of conviction. And at last he lay like a log, and 'twas an hour, or more, before he come to. But when he did, he had got peace and his burthen was taken away, thanks be!"

"And there was a girl, too, very poor and sickly-looking," said Joel. "And when the power of the Lord came upon her she went into a kind of trance. Her eyes were open, but she saw nothing. Tears were falling down her cheeks, but they were tears of joy; for she kept on saying, 'How Thou hast loved sinners!' over and over again. And there was such a smile on her face! When we go to Heaven, I expect we shall see the angels smile like that!"

"And the man himself—the preacher—did he seem filled with joy and peace?" asked Jackson, covertly malicious.

"Why that is the strange thing!" returned Richard Gibbs, with frank simplicity. "Although he was doing this great work, and witnessing the mercies of the Lord descend on the people like manna, yet Mr. Powell had such a look of deep sorrow on his face as I never saw. It was a kind of a fixed, hopeless look. He said, 'I speak to you out of a dark dungeon, but you are in the light. Give thanks and rejoice, and hasten to make your calling and election sure. Those who dwell in the blackness of the shadow could tell you terrible things.'"

Mrs. Thimbleby wiped away a tear with the corner of her shabby black shawl. "Ah!" she sighed, "it do seem a hard dispensation and a strange one, as him who brings glad tidings to so many shouldn't get peace himself. And a more angelic creetur' in his kindness to the afflicted never walked this earth. Yet he's a'most always bowed down with heaviness of spirit. It do seem strange!"

Jonathan Maxfield struck the table with his fist so hard that the candlesticks standing on it rocked. "Strange!"

he cried, "it would be strange indeed to see anything else! Why this is the work of the enemy as plain as possible. Don't tell me! Look at all the years I've been a member of Christian congregations in Whitford—whether in chapel or church, it is no matter—and tell me if ever there was known such ravings, and fits, and Bedlam doings? And yet I suppose there were souls saved in my time too! I say that Satan is busy among you, puffing up one and another with sperritual pride."

"Lord forgive you!" ejaculated Richard Gibbs, in a tone of such genuine pity and conviction as startled the rest.

"Lord forgive me, sir!" echoed old Max, turning slowly round upon the speaker, and glaring at him from under his grey eyebrows.

There was an awe-stricken silence.

"Our good friend, Richard Gibbs, meant no offence, Mr. Maxfield," said Jackson, looking everywhere except into Gibbs's face.

"I say," cried Maxfield, addressing the rest of the company, and entirely ignoring the rash delinquent Gibbs, "that these things are a snare and a delusion, and the work of the devil. And when them of more wisdom and experience than me comes forward to speak on the matter, I shall be glad to show forth my reasons."

"Why, but, brother Maxfield, I don't know now. I don't feel so sure," said Gladwish, on whom the accounts of Powell's preaching had produced a considerable effect. "There have been cases, you know, in the early times of Methodism; and John Wesley himself, you know, was ready to believe in the workings of grace, as manifested in similar ways."

"Don't tell me of your David Powells!" returned old Max, declining to discuss the subject on wide or general grounds, but doggedly confining himself to the particulars immediately before him. "Don't tell me of a man as is blown out with pride and vain glory like a balloon. Did I, or did I not, say more'n two year ago, that David Powell was getting puffed up with presumptuousness?"

There was a low murmur of assent. Brother Jackson closed his eyes and uttered a deep, long-drawn "A-a-ah!" like a man reluctantly admitting a painful truth.

"Did I, or did I not, say to many members of the Society, 'This man is dangerous. He has fallen from grace. He is hankering after new-fangled doctrine, and is ramping with red-hot overbearingness?'"

"You did, sir," answered a stout, broad-faced man named Blogg, who looked like a farmer, but was a linendraper in a small way of business. "You said so frequently; I remember your very words, and can testify to 'em."

This speech appeared to produce a considerable effect. Mrs. Thimbleby began to cry; and, not having an apron at hand, threw the corner of her shawl over her face.

"Did I, or did I not, say that if things went on at this kind of rate, I should withdraw from the Society? And did I, or did I not, withdraw from it accordin'?"

"Sir," said Mr. Blogg, "I saw you with my own eyes a-coming out of the parish church of St. Chad's, at ten minutes to one o'clock in the afternoon of the Sunday next following your utterance of them identical expressions; and cannot deny or evade the truth, but must declare it to the best of my ability, with no regard to any human respects, but for the ease and liberation of my conscience as a sincere though humble professor."

There was a general feeling that, in some conclusive though mysterious way, the linendraper had brought a crushing weight of evidence to bear against David Powell; and even the preacher's best friends would find it difficult to defend him after that!

Old Max looked round triumphantly, and proceeded to follow up the impression thus made. "And then I'm to be told," said he, "that the lunatic doings on Whitmeadow are the work of Heavenly powers, eh? Come, Gladwish—you're a man as has read theologies and controversies, and are acquainted with the history of Wesleyan Methodism as well as most members in Whitford—I should like to know what arguments you have to advance against plain facts—facts known to us all, and testified to by Robert Blogg, linendraper, now present, and for many years a respected class-leader in this town?"

"Well, but we have plain facts to bring forward too," said Richard Gibbs, with anxious earnestness.

"I ask you, Gladwish, what arguments you have to bring forward," repeated Maxfield, determinedly repressing any outward sign of having heard the presumptuous Gibbs.

"If this be not Satan's doing, I have no knowledge of the words of the devil, and I suppose I shall hardly be told that, after regular attendance in a congregation of Wesleyan Methodists for fifty odd years, man and boy! But," continued the old man, after a short silence, which none of those present ventured to break, "there's no knowing, truly. These are new-fangled days. I cannot say but what I may live to hear it declared that I know nothing of Satan, nor cannot discern his works when I see them!"

"Nay, father," said Seth Maxfield, speaking now for the first time, in deprecation of so serious a charge against the "new-fangled days," on which Whitford had fallen. "Nay, no man will say that, nor yet think it. But my notion is, that it may neither be Heaven nor t'other place that has much to do with these kind of fits and screechings. I believe it to be just as Dr. Evans said—and he a Welshman himself, you'll remember—when he first heard of these doings of David Powell in Wales. Says he, 'It's a epidemic,' says the doctor. 'A catching kind of nervous disease, neither more nor less. And you may any of you get it, if you go to hear and see the others. Though forewarned is forearmed in such cases,' says the doctor. 'And the better you understand the real natur' of the disorder, the safer you'll be from it.'"

Seth was of a materialistic and practical turn of mind, and he offered this hypothesis as an explanation which had approved itself to his own judgment (not because he thoroughly comprehended Dr. Evans's statements, but rather because of the inherent repugnance of his mind to accept a supernatural theory about any phenomenon, when a natural theory might be substituted for it), and also as a neutral ground of conciliation, whereon the opposing celestial and diabolic partisans might meet half way. But it speedily appeared that he had miscalculated in so doing. Neither the friends, nor the opponents of David Powell, would for an instant admit any such rationalistic suggestion. It was scouted on all hands. And Seth, who had no gift of controversy, speedily found himself reduced to silence.

"Well," said he, quietly, when he and his father rose to go away, "think what you please, but I know that if one of my reapers was to fall down in the field that way, let him be praying or cursing, I should consider it a hospital case."

"Good night, Gladwish," said old Max. "Good night, Mrs. Gladwish. I am glad, for the sake of all the decent, sober, godly members of the society, as this firebrand had left it before things came to this pass. And I only wish you'd all had the gift of clear-sightedness to see through him long ago, and cut yourselves off from him as I did."

Richard Gibbs advanced towards the old man with outstretched hand. "I hope, Mr. Maxfield," he said, humbly, "that you'll not think I meant any offence to you just now. But I was so full of conviction, and you know we can but speak the truth to the best of our power. I hope you nor any other Christian man will be in wrath with me, because we don't see things just alike. I know Mr. Powell is always for making peace, for he says we many a time fancy we're fighting the Lord's battles, when, in truth, we are only desiring victory for our own pride. Anyway, I know he would bid me ask pardon for a hasty word, if any offence had come by it. And so I hope you'll shake hands."

Jonathan Maxfield took no notice of the proffered hand. Neither did he make any answer directly. But as he reached the door, he turned round and said, "Well, Mr. Jackson, you have your work cut out for you, with some of your flock, I doubt. Like to like. I expect that ranting Welshman will draw some away from decent chapel-going. But them as admires such doings are best got rid of, and that speedily." With that he walked off.

"I think Maxfield was rather hard on poor Dicky Gibbs," said Mr. Gladwish to his spouse when they were alone together. "He might ha' shook hands. Dicky came forward in a real Christian spirit. Maxfield was very hard in his wrath."

"Well," returned the virtuous matron, "I can't so much wonder. Having the Lord's forgiveness called down on his head in that way! And I don't know, Gladwish, as we should like it ourselves!"

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXI. THE "DUMMY" DEEDS.

I WAS a strong and skilful swimmer, but to make way through water with one's clothes on is a difficult matter for unaccustomed limbs, and I made but very slow progress. I soon began to feel numb and cold, and presently every stroke became such a labour, that it seemed each one must be my last. If I had had only myself to save, I verily believe I should have given up the struggle and sunk; but the thought that my darling's life depended on my exertions spurred me on. If my limbs were numb, what must hers have been, to whom all movement was denied? To die would be to doom her to a death ten times more lingering and terrible than mine, and, therefore, I must needs live.

At last I reached the boat-house, and dragged myself up the steps; then wasted perforce some precious minutes in gaining breath and strength, before I took the file. A few strokes, however, separated the slender chain, and I was in the skiff and labouring—oh, how slowly!—at the sculls, in less time than I could have believed possible. Like one who comes from death to life after a wasting fever, I was weak, yet gathered strength with every breath I drew. I could see my darling's head above the waters yet, and made for her as straight as my dizzy brain would permit me.

"I am safe, Harry; I am safe!" she cried, as I drew near, knowing those words would nerve me better far than any cordial; but I dared not lose breath in answering her. I reached her somehow, and with infinite difficulty contrived to get her into the frail boat, as cold, and white, and damp as death itself—or I. And yet, now that the worst was over, I could scarcely wish that the catastrophe had not occurred. We had risked death together, and ere we reached the shore I had won her promise that she would be mine for life; a recompense that paid for all.

Notwithstanding so severe an ordeal, Gertrude's constitution did not seem to take harm from this mishap, which showed, despite her recent indisposition, that it was naturally strong. I think, indeed, my aunt suffered more from the relation of our adventure, than we did ourselves from the experience of it. She shuddered, and shivered, and jingled her rings at the recital of our woes in a manner piteous to witness; nor would she permit Gertrude again to tempt the dangers of the lake until a life-belt of the latest construction had been sent for from town, without which she gave a solemn promise never to enter the skiff.

What had become of the key of the skiff we could not discover, and should probably have set it down among those mysterious disappearances of inanimate objects which occur in the best-regulated establishments, and the nature of which seems more worthy of investigation than many other matters which at present engage philosophic inquiry; but what made it look suspiciously like malicious design was the fact of a plug having been removed from the punt at the same time, the absence of which had caused our calamity. If it was a practical joke, it had very nearly been a fatal one; yet such it probably was; for though Stanbrook, as I have said, invited no tourist visitors, one or two knapsack-carrying sons of commerce in the shape of pedlars occasionally visited it, and one of these had called at the Rectory on the day in question and been dismissed without a deal. To this failure in commercial enterprise the sorry trick that had been played us was doubtless owing. The rector did not say much, but the activity with which he scoured the country for the next three days on his cob, armed with an enormous horsewhip, showed the direction in which his thoughts were tending. However, fortunately, as it turned out, for all parties, his quest was not successful.

About this time there arrived for my uncle—what was a very rare event with him indeed—a business letter. He hated business, and—perhaps because he was totally unfitted for such matters—despised it. He used to term it "that cumbersome and pretentious machinery for the transaction of affairs called Business;" and every communication on that theme, which arrived in the Rectory letter-bag, was at once relegated to Mark Raeburn.

But Mark was far away with his sick brother at the seaside, and this matter was urgent. It referred to the expiry of the lease of certain contiguous houses in a London street in which my uncle had invested a large portion of his property, and which the writer was anxious to purchase, en bloc, for the establishment of some emporium.

"Deuce take the fellow, how should I know when the lease expires?" asked my uncle comically, as though he were the last person in the world to be expected to know it. "The matter is your concern, Harry, as much as mine, for the money will be yours one day, so it is but just that you should take the trouble off my shoulders. Take the cob and ride over to the Priory to-day, and look at the lease. John Raeburn will give you a sight of it—he has the counterpart, of course—and then we needn't trouble Mark at all."

So off I went to Kirkdale, after an absence that had now extended to some weeks, nor had I any intention, even yet, of returning thither for good. As John was all alone, my uncle bade me bring him back with me for a day or two, if he could be spared from the office.

"Well, John, I am come to fetch you over to Stanbrook," were my first words on meeting him, and I thought they would have lighted his face with pleasure, for he had no more real liking for legal pursuits than I had myself, and always welcomed a holiday. But, to my surprise, he shook his head with all the gravity of Lord Burleigh, and pronounced the thing to be quite impossible.

"I am in sole charge here, you see, Sheddon, with only the clerks to help me, and I dare not leave the office."

I did not feel bound to press the matter. It was likely enough that he had a good deal to do; indeed, my lively friend seemed to have already grown older by some years under the burden of his unaccustomed responsibilities; and, moreover, the proverb that "Two is company but three is none" had great weight with me just then, and I had no personal desire to import a companion for Gertrude and myself to Stanbrook.

"Well, John, and what is the news?"

"My father is made mayor of Kirkdale," answered he, "and may wear a scarlet gown if he pleases. It is a great dignity, but his grey mare will be the better horse for all that."

"I don't doubt it," returned I drily. "But what is the news of your Uncle Alec?"

"The accounts of him are certainly better; but he does not seem to like the sea," answered John in a strange mechanical way, "and I should not be surprised if we had him back again here within the fortnight."

"I am afraid it does not much matter where he goes, so far as his health is concerned," said I. "It seemed to me, when he left the Rectory, that it was merely a question of a few weeks, more or less, of life."

"Well, the doctor at Sandibeach," replied John, in the same unwonted tone, "seems to think better of him than Wilde did; and, at all events, gives the poor old fellow a longer lease."

I shook my head incredulously, and the mention of the word "lease" suggesting my errand, I at once went on to that, and explained its nature.

"Your uncle's lease will be in the box in the office, along with his other papers, no doubt," said John, at once adopting his old cheery manners, "but I am afraid the governor has taken the keys with him."

This we found to be the case; but, nevertheless, on searching the house for them, we came upon other keys, one of which fitted the padlock that fastened the box, and so I got it open. It was pretty full of papers, and, on turning them over to find the lease, I came upon certain securities the signature to one of which suddenly riveted my attention.

"Hullo, what have you got there?"

cried John, perceiving my astonishment; "you mustn't be reading anything but the lease, you know."

He got up, rather excitedly, from his high stool, and came towards me, as though he would have shut the box.

"Excuse me, John," said I, "but what I have got here demands some explanation. Do you see this signature that purports to be my uncle's?"

"Of course I do. 'Purports?' Why, of course it is your uncle's; whose else would you have it to be?"

"No one else's, of course. I would have it to be his own. But this is a forgery—not his own writing—John."

"A what?" cried he, turning very red. "You must not talk like that, Sheddon. If there was a clerk in this room I would prosecute you for libel. It is a devilish serious thing, you know."

"It is, John," interrupted I gravely; "so serious that I think I ought to carry this deed back to Stanbrook with me. I will take my oath that my uncle Hastings never wrote his own name here."

Here John burst into such a fit of laughter as I had never heard him indulge in before; he sent forth peal after peal, and held his sides as actors do upon the stage, while the tears absolutely rolled down his cheeks.

"Why, you stupid old fellow," gasped he, "is it possible that you are not aware that all the papers in these tin boxes are 'dummies?' Do you imagine that my father would suffer the securities of his clients to lie about on these shelves, to be got at by any common key, such as you have picked out of an old drawer? Suppose there was a fire—what would become of them all then? Really, my dear Sheddon, if you are so very simple as all that, I am afraid we shall never make a lawyer of you. These are merely dummies, my good fellow, which are kept here for reference—the real deeds are not to be got at quite so easily. They are in fire-proof boxes in the bank cellars."

"But the lease here," argued I, "is properly signed. I can swear to my uncle's handwriting in this case; whereas, in the other, it is only a clumsy imitation."

"That is all as it should be, my good fellow; the lease is not a dummy, but a duplicate. Really, Sheddon, if you were not the good fellow I know you to be, such doubts as you have expressed would have annoyed me excessively. You may take the whole box away with you, so far as I care; but it is my advice to you, upon all accounts, not to do so, and especially not to repeat your injurious remarks, either here or elsewhere."

"My dear John," replied I, a little ashamed of my intemperate language, though by no means convinced that it was only excusable on the ground of my ignorance, "I am really very sorry; but I always thought that these boxes held the actual deeds, and even seem to recollect you or your father having told me so."

"Your memory must have played you false, then," answered John, with stiffness. "Please to make a note of what is required as respects the lease, and then let me have the key again. I was wrong to permit the box to be opened without my father's leave."

I took the note, then gave him back the key. "I am very sorry for what has happened," said I, frankly, "and for whatever I may have said under a misconception."

"That is quite sufficient, my dear Sheddon. Of course it galled me that you should think it possible that there was anything wrong with your uncle's securities. I almost think I ought to tell my father, in order that he may explain the matter to Mr. Hastings."

"Well," said I, "if you wouldn't mind, John, I think that would be the most satisfactory course." I could see that my thus taking him at his word surprised and annoyed him immensely; but I had no intention of retracting.

His own explanation would, doubtless, have satisfied me had the matter concerned myself alone; but I felt that it was only right that my uncle should be informed of what still struck me as—to say the least of it—a peculiarity in the mode of dealing with business documents. John made no further remark upon the matter, and we parted on good terms; but I could see by his grave and serious air, which was with him a sign of extreme mental disturbance, that his sensibilities were deeply touched. Though by no means devotedly attached to his mother, he had an honest affection for his father, I believe, and naturally resented any seeming imputation upon his good faith, for which I did not blame him. Nevertheless, the matter seemed graver to me the more I thought of it; and after dinner, that evening, I did not fail to tell my uncle all that had occurred.

He allowed that the thing looked "very odd;" he had never heard of "dummy" parchments, though it did not surprise him that such a system—which must necessarily double the price of "law" to the general public—should be in full swing. It was better, he agreed, that Mark should write and explain the matter.

In a few days the attorney did so, and his explanation was, in effect, what his son had already told me. The rector's genuine securities reposed, he said, along with those of his (the attorney's) other clients in the safe of the Kirkdale Bank. "And if you have the least doubt, my dear Hastings—I do not say of the probity of your old friend and neighbour, but of the fact—you have only to apply to the bank-manager for a look at them."

I thought this rather an unpleasant way of putting the matter. Its effect was to overwhelm my uncle with shame and confusion; and I really believe it cost him an effort for some time even to get a cheque changed over the counter of Messrs. Bullion and Tissue, for fear it should be supposed that he had gone thither to resolve his doubts. A fortnight afterwards he got a note from "Brother Alec," informing him that, though not much improved in health, he had made up his mind to return to Kirkdale, since, after all, when one was sick, there was no place like home.

This communication, or rather the terms of it, for John had already informed me of his uncle's discontent with the seaside, astonished us considerably.

The old man's mind must have quite broken down, we all agreed, to have expressed himself in that way concerning the Priory.

Then, after a little, a note came to Gertrude from Mrs. Raeburn, to say that the invalid had returned, and begging her to bring her visit to the Rectory to a close, as she really could not spare her "dear companion" any longer. It was high time for me also to resume my legal studies; so Gerty and I returned to Kirkdale together, both feeling it very like going back to school after the holidays, yet pleased enough to feel that the misfortune was common to us both.

CHAPTER XXII. ALEC'S SICK-ROOM.

At the Priory we found things duller than ever, and poor brother Alec not even visible. The journey home had exhausted his little remaining strength, and it was necessary that he should keep his bed and recruit. This was nothing more than what Dr. Wilde had expected, and he declined even to come and see his patient. It was clear he could do nothing for him; and since Mrs. Raeburn would not hear of his visiting him as a friend, without a fee, the sensitive doctor kept away altogether. I am bound to say that the old man's relatives were very assiduous in their attentions to him; nothing was omitted that could conduce to his comfort, and almost everything was done for him with their own hands. Mark would spend hours talking with him by his bedside; John read the newspaper to him; and Mrs. Raeburn prepared his meals with her own hands. The sick man had arranged for the payment of his annuity by quarterly instalments, but of course his going to town in person to receive them was out of the question; and he wrote to the Insurance Office to that effect. His brain, Mrs. Raeburn protested, was still as clear as ever, and he took the same delight in his dumb favourites—if, indeed, the conversational Chico could be so designated. Their master's inaction and confinement to his bed, however, was taken in dudgeon by both dog and bird, for the former howled and whined in a most depressing manner, while at all hours of the night I heard the latter croaking and mumbling what sounded like anathemas through the partition-wall. This was the more remarkable, since Mrs. Raeburn had informed me that what her brother-in-law seemed to crave for was perfect quiet, and expressed her regret that, under these circumstances, she could not admit me to his room. My uncle, however, rode over on one occasion, and insisted upon seeing his old friend, whom he described as looking better, rather than worse, but much disinclined for talk. Gertrude had also been privileged to visit the invalid once or twice, but of late this had been prohibited, on the ground that she had shown symptoms of a recurrence of the indisposition she had had before going to Stanbrook, and that the atmosphere of a sick room was injurious to her. At last a day came when the patient was pronounced sufficiently well to receive me, a circumstance of which I was very ready to avail myself, since I could not understand why John Raeburn should have been so long permitted access to his uncle's chamber, while it had been denied to me. I set it down, indeed, naturally enough, to a desperate endeavour on Mrs. Raeburn's part to influence the old man's feelings, at the last, in behalf of her son; though, if brother Alec was as well as she described him to be, I could not conceive how he himself submitted to such an arrangement. I had been always a favourite with him from his first arrival at the Priory, and our intimacy had greatly increased during his stay at Stanbrook; whereas John he had rather tolerated than encouraged. However, Heaven knows it was with no feeling of jealousy of the latter, far less of resentment against the changeful whim of an invalid, that I now entered brother Alec's apartment for the first time since my return to the Priory.

He was lying in bed, with his face turned towards the door, and therefore, to me, it was hid in shadow. Notwithstanding that it was a fine bright autumnal day, the sunlight was almost excluded from the room by Venetian blinds, an arrangement which made his sunbrowned features still more sombre. His eyes were by no means so piercing as of old, and gazed out at me from half-shut lids; else, I agreed with my uncle, that he looked no worse than when I had seen him last. I noticed, too, that the hand which he held out to me was tolerably plump, and grasped my own with some vigour. His voice, on the other hand, was low, and he contented himself for the most part with answering my questions about his health, of which he spoke, as indeed was his usual custom, with careless cheerfulness. He did not feel himself much weaker in body than when at Stanbrook, he said, but that conversation was wearisome to his brain. "When John has read the newspaper aloud, that is almost enough for me," added he, an excuse, as I understood, for his not having desired my company. Of course I accepted the apology, though it struck me as singularly illogical; for why should I be more inclined to converse than John (who, indeed, was an incessant talker), or less competent to read to him? Then he went on to speak of my uncle and aunt in terms of warm affection indeed, yet in conventional phrase, such as he had been by no means wont to use when under their roof. Without having any great originality, brother Alec had always avoided in the expression of his feelings such cut-and-dried terms as he used now; and I read in them, more than in all else, the decay of his mental powers. What also struck me as a bad sign about him was, that my presence did not, as usual, suggest any reference to Gertrude; that subtle link which connects thought with thought—Association—appeared to have snapped already.

"Well, Chico," said I, turning from the old man to his bird, which, to my surprise, was in its cage, and addressing it cheerfully, "and how are you?"

"Dead, dead!" responded the bird, stroking his scarlet plume, and regarding the heap of nut-shells at his feet as though they had been a new-made grave. "Dead, dead! Only think of that!"

"Chico is not a cheerful companion for our patient," remarked Mrs. Raeburn, looking up from the book which she was reading, close by the window, where, indeed, alone light could be found for that purpose; "but I cannot persuade him to have that bird removed to another room."

"Let him be, let him be," murmured brother Alec from the bed. He had already closed his eyes, as if exhausted. Mrs. Raeburn threw up her hands, as much as to say, "You hear! He will have it so!"

"But the dog must be much worse," observed I, speaking, like Mrs. Raeburn herself, in a whisper; "its noise at night is sometimes awful."

"That is so, Mr. Sheddon; but we have at last persuaded our dear friend, here, to dispense with the creature. Fury will leave after to-day."

Looking towards the subject of our talk, for the first time I perceived, with great surprise, that, though occupying the same spot in the room as usual, the animal was chained to a staple of the wall.

"That measure of precaution was absolutely necessary," explained Mrs. Raeburn, interpreting my glance. "The beast has taken such an antipathy to John. Indeed, when he goes, it will be for all of us a most happy release."

I am quite sure Fury knew that Mrs. Raeburn was talking about him, and I think he knew what she said. At this ungracious reference to his departure, he fixed his bloodshot eyes upon her with a concentration of vision I have never seen except in a mesmerist, and uttered a menacing growl. "His master will miss him just at first, no doubt," continued she, quietly; "but in the end he cannot but be relieved by his absence."

Here Fury turned his blunt nose towards the ceiling, and, opening his enormous jaws, gave utterance to a howl of anguish, so prolonged and deep that it might have stood for the coronach of his entire race. Even brother Alec, well accustomed as he was to hear the voice of his favourite, raised his heavy eyelids at the sound, and feebly smiled. I thought it a good opportunity to wish him good-bye for the present, since he was obviously disinclined for further talk, and I did so.

"Mr. Alexander is easily tired," observed Mrs. Raeburn, looking up once more from her book. "It may have seemed hard to have debarred you from this room so long, Mr. Sheddon, but you now know for yourself that there was a reason for it."

There was no denying this fact; and yet the reflection that I was to be excluded from poor brother Alec's presence for at least as long as I had already been, nay, perhaps even until his demise, not only saddened but chilled me; a shudder crept over me at the thought of his lying in that darkened room, watched by that hateful woman, and even with my feet upon its threshold, I hesitated to cross it.

"Perhaps, Mr. Sheddon, it would be more agreeable to your feelings," remarked Mrs. Raeburn, coldly, "to see our dear invalid alone. If so, you can do so." Then, reading my reply in my face, she rose from her chair, and with obtrusively careful tread, as though to remind me that I stood in a sick room, she moved into the next apartment and closed the door behind her.

If brother Alec had started from his pillow at that moment and cried, "Save me, save me from that woman!" I should not have been more astonished than I was by his total unconcern at this proceeding. I had certainly expected a smile of friendliness, perhaps even a whispered assurance that, notwithstanding that he had never sent for me, his sentiments towards me were what they had ever been; the presence of Mrs. Raeburn must surely have hitherto restrained him from expressing his feelings; and now he would be more like himself. But no; he uttered not a syllable. He had noticed her leave the room, I saw; yet he remained precisely as before—silent, motionless, without so much as turning his eyes towards me.

"I hope, Mr. Raeburn," said I, earnestly, "that you are quite comfortable here, and want for nothing. If you have any wish—or fear," (I said this very significantly, for I myself felt a shadowy apprehension of I know not what the while I spoke) "I beseech you to reveal it to me."

"Thank you, Sheddon," returned the sick man in low but distinct tones, "I am quite as I would be here; my relatives are all very kind."

His manner was cold, as though deprecating, if not resenting, my interference. It had been his wont, too, of late to call me "Harry," and not "Sheddon," and the change did not escape me.

"I hope," said I, "that I have, at all events, not offended you, Mr. Raeburn?"

"No, no, lad, but I am very tired; that is all."

He did not even put out his hand to me in farewell, but drawing the bed-clothes round about him, and feebly murmuring "Good-bye, good-bye," he once more closed his eyes.

I left the room with a heavy heart, and not a little wounded by this behaviour on the part of the old man, which to me was inexplicable. I had occasionally witnessed the irritability produced by illness; my Aunt Eleanor was a sufferer from neuralgia, and under its influence would deal out her sharp words to everybody, without distinction of sex or age, and including even her medical attendants; but brother Alec's conduct was altogether different. Moreover, he had been heretofore distinguished for his patience under pain; so far from diminishing the tenderness of his nature, his disease seemed rather to have intensified it.

"How did you find my brother, Sheddon?" whispered the attorney, who was sitting as usual in the office, accompanied by his two clerks, John having been sent for that morning to a neighbouring town, from which he was not expected to return until the following night.

"Better than I expected, sir, in some respects; but in others greatly changed."

"Ah, here!" sighed Mark, touching his forehead significantly; "that is what we all see. Mr. Wilde prepared us for that, you know."

I did not think it worth while to explain that I had found the sick man altered in feeling rather than intelligence, but simply nodded assent. "It's very sad," continued the attorney, "but only what we must expect. It is fortunate that he is so well in his wits, poor fellow, as he is, since to-morrow he will have business to transact. The secretary of the Assurance Company is coming down to see him, and I have written to your uncle to be kind enough to ride over and meet him. They are old college friends, you know."

"So I heard," said I; "but how can my uncle help you; he is not a very good man of business, I fear."

"That is true; but I have begged him

to come over and smooth matters a bit. It will prevent Alec being excited if he sees old friends about him, and make the whole proceedings less formal."

"What proceedings?" inquired I, not with very good manners, perhaps; but I felt an extreme curiosity to know what possible use could be made of poor "Alec" under present circumstances by his devoted relatives.

"Well, it is merely a matter of form. Since my brother cannot go to town, the secretary must needs come down to convince himself of his being alive, before making the quarterly payment. Yet, merely passive as is the part our poor patient has to play, the idea of it agitates him in the most absurd degree. Though by no means without stamina, as you have seen, he exhibits all the nervousness of extreme debility."

I could not help remarking that, throughout that day, and still more upon the next, the attorney was greatly "agitated" also; which was the more unfortunate, since John being away, a larger share of the work of the office devolved upon himself. Our two assistants were mere copying-clerks—little more than boys in age—whose copying (from John's example, perhaps) included mimicry of their master as well as the duplication of legal documents. If the attorney employed them, by reason of their tender youth, with the idea that they would not keep so sharp an eye, as their elders might have done, upon his own proceedings, he was very egregiously mistaken. Often have I seen them tilt their ink-bottles and roll their heads with significance when Mark was more than usually overcome with liquor, and much they hailed the occasional absences of his son and heir, whose eye no pantomimic performance could escape; and who (in Jove's absence) would often admonish them by casting a thunderbolt, in the shape of an office-ruler, with the most unerring precision.

The attorney, who had taken less and less heed to his ways, in respect of drink, for some months past, seemed on this day to have cast off all decency; and, after dinner, could not be induced to leave his brandy-bottle, even to come into the drawing-room. It was well, indeed, that it so happened, since he was really not in a fit state to present himself there. His son's presence, and especially his wife's, had hitherto been some restraint upon him; but now that the former was away, and the latter upstairs with the invalid, he seemed to have utterly given way to his wretched passion. I found Gertrude looking so very distressed and pale, that I thought at first she had become acquainted with this fact.

"My darling Gerty," cried I, "what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," answered she, trying to smile; "at least, nothing worse than what I have experienced already. But I am certainly not quite well."

"You look deadly ill," exclaimed I, with imprudent anxiety.

"That is because I have been in pain; but I am better now. Mrs. Raeburn has taken me in hand, and I think her treatment has been successful."

"What can you know about your illness? You ought to see Mr. Wilde at once," said I.

"No, no; there is really no necessity for that, Harry. He will only order me change of air again, which is ridiculous. Besides, I should be sorry to leave the house just now, when, at any time, I may be called upon to make myself useful to poor cousin Alexander. Mrs. Raeburn is wearing herself out with her constant attendance upon him. I must say she behaves very well in that respect."

"If you must say so, you must, my dear," returned I, with some irritation, for my one cause of quarrel with Gertrude was her too great charity with regard to that woman. "I believe Mrs. Raeburn's attentions to him are merely mercenary, and arise from the lowest motives."

"Well, at all events, they cannot be 'mercenary' in my case," pleaded my darling; "and she has certainly done me good."

It was hopeless to argue with her against anybody while she wore that generous smile, which would, in my eyes, have vindicated a Mother Brownrigg; so I only hushed her lips in lover's fashion, and then turned to other topics.

It was fated to be the last evening for many a one to be spent in that fashion by me.

NOTIFICATIONS EXTRAORDINARY.

An American beauty, finding the food of love taken in the small hours not conducive to pleasant dreams and sweet repose, advertised the disturbers of her rest to stop singing "If ever I cease to love" beneath her window, and come indoors and talk business. This effectually scared the heart-stricken serenaders, none of whom, apparently, meant serious business. If they did, they failed to arrange satisfactory terms of partnership, for, such a publicity-loving lady would assuredly have insisted upon the happy man proclaiming his happiness, after the manner of the Levenworth official, who thus warned off all aspirants to the affections he had secured:—"Engaged: Miss Anne Gould, to John Caudal, city marshal, both of Levenworth, Kansas. From this time henceforth and for ever, until Miss Anne Gould becomes a widow, all young men are requested to withdraw their particular attentions." If Kansas lovers are given to publishing their little arrangements in this way, a Kansas newspaper must be almost as lively reading as the Cherokee Times, which, recording the marriage of Mr. Sariah Pratt and Miss Mary Foote, says:—"Sariah is one of the best boys Cherokee ever had, and, now that he will Foote it the rest of his journey, we wish both him and his handsome young wife a happy wedded-life, with a good round number of Pratt-ling responsibilities to cheer the way and make life truly blest." The Cherokee editor's playfulness would hardly have been appreciated a quarter of a century ago, when the following specimen was thought a neat thing in marriage notices:—"Married simultaneously, on the 24th ult., by the Rev. J. W. Wallace, J. H. Burritt, Esq., of Connecticut, to Miss Ann W. Watson; and Mr. Augustus Wood, to Miss Sarah Wair, Columbia co., Georgia. The ceremony was conducted under the most engaging forms of decency, and was ministered with sober and impressive dignity. The subsequent hilarity was rendered doubly entertaining by the most pleasing urbanity and decorum of the guests; the convivial board exhibited an elegant profusion of all that fancy could mingle, or the most splendid liberality collect; nor did the nuptial evening afford a banquet less grateful to the intellectual senses. The mind was regaled with all that is captivating in colloquial fruition, and transported with all that is divine in the union of congenial spirits;

While hovering seraphs lingered near,
And dropped their harps, so charmed to hear!"

In the happy coming-time, when the sexes shall stand upon a footing of perfect equality, the dupes of fair flirts will, doubtless, find twelve good women and true ready to make defaulting damsels pay for promise breaking. A jilted lover will not need to take his revenge in an irregular way, like the gentleman who advertised in the General Advertiser:—"Whereas, on Sunday, April 12th, 1750, there was seen in Cheapside, between the hours of four and five in the afternoon, a young gentleman, dressed in a light-coloured coat, with a blue waistcoat trimmed with silver lace, along with a young lady in mourning, going towards St. Martin's near Aldersgate. This is, therefore, to acquaint the said gentleman (as a friend) to be as expeditious as possible in the affair, lest otherwise he should unhappily meet with the same disappointment at last, by another stepping in in the meantime, as a young gentleman has been lately served by the aforesaid young lady, who, after a courtship of these four months last past, and that with her approbation, and in the most public manner possible, and with the utmost honour as could possibly become a gentleman. Take this, sir, only as a friendly hint." Far less courteous, under similar provocation, was the discarded suitor who proclaimed:—"Whereas, Parmelia B. did promise to marry me on the 19th instant, but, instead of doing so, did flunk and run off, I brand her as a liar and a person of bad character generally." Possibly the fickle Parmelia had very good reasons for changing her mind; at any rate, the rejected groom might have vented his wrath in milder terms. Mary Dodd, of Livingstone county, Kentucky, was fully justified in denouncing a gay deceiver as she did, in the Kentucky Reporter, of the fifth of September, 1817:—"Take notice and beware of the swindler Jesse Dougherty, who married me in November last, and some time after marriage informed me that he had another wife alive, and before I recovered, the villain left me, and took one of my best horses. One of my neighbours was so good as to follow him and take the horse from him, and bring him back. The said Dougherty is about forty years of age, five feet ten inches high, round shouldered, thick lips, complexion and hair dark, grey eyes, remarkably ugly and ill-natured, very fond of ardent spirits, and by profession a notorious liar. This is, therefore, to warn all widows to beware of the swindler, as all he wants is their property, and he cares not where they go after he gets that. The said Dougherty has a number of wives living, perhaps eight or ten (the number not positively known), and will, no doubt, if he can get them, have eight or ten more. I believe that is the way he makes his living.—MARY DODD."

Spite of his ugliness the widow-hunter seems to have found women were to be had for the asking. Matthew Dawson, of Bothwell, Cumberland, thought they were to be had without asking, and advertised his marriage without troubling to provide a bride for the occasion. After announcing that the happy event would come off at Holm Church, on the Thursday before Whitsuntide, the impudent rascal went on:—"Mr. Reid gives a turkey to be roasted; Ed. Clementson gives a fat lamb to be roasted; Jos. Gibson gives a fat calf to be roasted. And in order that all this meat may be well basted, do you see, Mary Pearson, Betty Hodgson, Mary Berkley, Molly Fisher, Sarah Briscoe, and Betty Porthones give, each of them, a pound of butter. The advertiser will provide everything else. And he hereby gives notice to all young women desirous of changing his condition that he is at present disengaged; and advises them to consider, that, although there is luck in leisure, yet in this case delays are dangerous; for with him he is determined it shall be first come first served." Fifty years ago, a Cumberland wedding was a formidable affair. A handbill, dated 1820, runs thus:—"Notice is hereby given, that the marriage of Isaac Paterson with Frances Atkinson, will be solemnised in due form in the parish Church of Lamplugh, on Tuesday next, the 30th of May. Immediately after which, the bride and bridegroom, with their attendants, will proceed to Lonefort, in the said parish, when the nuptials will be celebrated by a variety of novel entertainments:—

Then come, one and all,
At Hymen's soft call;
From Whitehaven, Workington, Harrington, Dean,
Hail, Ponsonby, Blains, and all places between;
From Egremont, Cockermouth, Paston, St. Bees,
Cint, Kinnyside, Calder, and parts joining these;
And the country at large may come in if they please.
Such sports there will be as have seldom been seen;
Such wrestling, and firing, and dancing between;
And races for prizes, for frolic, and fun,
By horses, and asses, and dogs will be run,
That you'll all go home happy as sure as a gun.
In a word, such a wedding can ne'er fail to please,
For the sports of Olympus were trifles to these!

Impelled by the vexatious want of pence, Sterne became joint proprietor of a grimy window in a Cornhill alley, or rather he rented a single pane of it, in order to inform the public that—Epigrams, anagrams, paragrams, chronograms, monograms, epitaphs, epithalamiums, prologues, epilogues, madrigals, interludes, advertisements, letters, petitions, memorials on every occasion, essays on all subjects, pamphlets for and against ministers, with sermons upon any text or for any sect, would be supplied on reasonable terms by A.B., philologer. Yorick was not, evidently, very particular as to how he turned a penny, but he had more pride than the unappreciated genius who lately announced in a London shop-window:—"Goods removed, messages taken, carpets beaten, and poetry composed on any subject." John Grove, of White Waltham, Berkshire, did not pretend to supply poetry on demand, perhaps he exhausted his powers that way in the rhymes he set over his door, to tell the world of White Waltham:—

John Grove, grocer, and dealer in tea,
Sells the finest of congou and best of bohea;
A dealer in coppices, and measurer of land;
Sells the finest of snuff, and fine lily-white sand;
A singer of psalms, and a scrivener of money,
Collects the land-tax, and sells fine virgin honey;
A ragman, a carrier, a baker of bread,
He's clerk to the living as well as the dead;
Vestry clerk, petty constable, sells scissors and knives,
Best vinegar and buckles; and collects the small tithes.
He's treasurer to clubs, a maker of wills;
He surveys men's estates, and vends Henderson's pills;
Woollen draper and hosier; sells all sorts of shoes,
With the best earthenware; also takes in the news;
Deals in hurdles and eggs, sells the best of small beer,
The finest sea coals; and elected overseer.
He's deputy-overseer, sells fine writing-paper;
Has a vote for the county; and a linen-draper;
A dealer in cheese, sells the best Hampshire bacon,
Plays the fiddle divinely, if I'm not mistaken.

Even this man of many vocations, or the American dry-goods merchant who, besides practising both as lawyer and doctor, was capable of "auctioneering of the loudest kind, interwoven with ventriloquism," must yield the palm of versatility to Colin Pullinger, who still solicits public patronage at Selsey, near Chichester, as: "Contractor, inventor, fisherman, and mechanic; following the various trades and professions of a builder, carpenter, joiner, sawyer, undertaker, turner, cooper, painter, glazier, sign-painter, wooden-pump maker, paper-hanger, bell-hanger, boat-builder, clock-cleaner, locks repaired and keys fitted, repairer of umbrellas and parasols, mender of china and glass, net knitter, wire worker, grocer, baker, farmer, stuffer and preserver of the skins of birds and insects, copying-clerk, letter-writer, accountant, surveyor, engineer, land-measurer, house-agent, vestry-clerk, assistant-overseer, clerk to the Selsey Sparrow Club, clerk to the Selsey police, assessor and collector of land tax and property and income tax, collector of church and highway-rates;

has served at sea in the four quarters of the world, as seaman, sailmaker, cook, steward, mate, and navigator; the maker and inventor of an improved horse-shoe, an improved scarifier, a newly-invented couch-grass-cutter, a machine to tar rope, model of a vessel to cut asunder chains put across the mouths of harbours, a curious mouse-trap made on a scientific principle, where each mouse caught re-sets the trap to catch the next, requires no fresh baiting, and will catch them by dozens; also a mouse-trap on a most novel, ingenious, and simple construction, being perpetually set, the bait will last for months, every mouse enters the trap through the same opening, and is most effectually secured, first on one side, the next on the other, and so on in succession, catching any number; rat-traps on various constructions, an improved mole-trap, model of a steamboat on quite a new and improved construction, four feet long, and challenged to beat any boat of the same length in the world; crabs, lobsters, and prawns sent to any part of the world; mouse and rat traps lent on hire at one penny per week; an evening school; a penny savings bank. If you doubt me, try me." Beside this village Crichton's trade placard, the following odd one from Gloucestershire is commonplace:—"Johnny Overy lives here, teaches music by steam, egg merchant and parish-clerk, pig-killer and bell-man. J. O. sells red herrings and raisins, parasols and pistols, barm and sand, fiddle-strings and flour, tripe, dubbing, and all kinds of hardware but treacle." This, moreover, is surpassed in originality by the notice issued in 1820, by Burness and Son, down Bridgwater way, which ran thus:—"Burness and Son: blacksmith's and barber's work done here, horse-shoeing and shaving, locks mended and hare-curling, bleeding, teeth-drawing, and all other farriery work; all sorts of spirates licker akording to the late comerce treaty. Tak notis; my wife keeps skool and lerns folks as yu shall; teches reading and riting, and all other langurtches, and has assistants if required, to teach horritory, sowing, the mathematics, and all other fashionable diversions."

If the "skool" kept by the wife of Burness and Son was open to both sexes, it must surely have been one of that learned dame's pupils that advertised on the wall of the Bristol Exchange: "To marchants, traders, and uthers. A young man, about thirty years of age, who understands the bakker business and husbandry, would be glad to go to A-merry-ka or any outlandish place, as a hover seer and the like of that. N.B.—Has no objection to go to Bottomey Bay as a skool maaster, on condition his life can be inshured to the wild sauvages." More contemptuous still of ordinary orthography was the free and independent Missourian who emphatically notified all comers:—"Ce hear! Eye don't want ennybodi that has hosses which has the eppidutick infleunze or ani other infeirnal name to cum thru this gait under penalty. Keep shi!" But even he would have had a fair chance of winning a spelling match if pitted against the officials of a certain Warwickshire parish, who, five years back, posted on the church-door a "List of the men resisiding withen the parish of B—— qulifed and lible to serve as constbulls made out and agreed to at a metting of the inhabitance theirof in vestery for that purpose held on the third day of March, one thousand eaght hundurd and sevennty;" and underneath it another document running:—"Notic is hearby geven that there will be a vestery Meetting heald in the skolroom at B—— T——, on Munnday, March 21st, at fouer clock in the afternoon, fur nomination of gurdians and to chosen frech overseers and other offesers for the said parish, and other bissness, for tu surve for the forth suen year 1870." With all their ingenuity, the Warwickshire improvers of the Queen's English did not attain the unintelligible like the Welshman who wrote over his cottage-door, "Agoserqurdere," which, being interpreted for the benefit of a puzzled traveller, resolved itself into "Agues are cured here." Loose spellers sometimes put their words together as queerly as they spell them. An Irishman advertised:—"Straid away, on Saturday the 4, to roned splining cows, one horney one milky, enny person giving information will be hansably rewarded by replying to ——, New ary Co. down." On a tree in a field near Manchester might once be read:—"Nottis. Know kow is alloued in these medders, eny men or women letten their kows run the rode wot gits inter my medders aforesaid, shall have his tail cut orf by me.—Obadiah Rogers." An Arkansas ferryman intimated to all whom it might concern:—"Ef ennybody cums hear arter licker, or to git across the river, they can jes blow this hear horn, and ef I don't cum when my Betsey up at the house hears the horn blown, she'll cum down and sell them the licker or set them across the river when i'm away from hoam.—John Wilson. N.B.—Them that can't red will have to go to the Hous arter Betsey, tant but half a mile there."

In the time of Napoleon the Third, a notice was placed at the entrance to the Pavilion Henri Quatre, at St. Germains, setting forth:—"The persons hereunder mentioned are not allowed to enter—1. Men in working clothes; 2. Women without bonnets; 3. Servants without their masters or mistresses; 4. Children without their parents; 5. Wives without their husbands; 6. Dogs without their muzzles." Somebody blundered, but that somebody has the consolation of knowing officials of the new regime are just as fallible. When the prefect of Lyons decreed that cafés and wine shops must close their doors at half-past eleven, he thought it necessary to warn all persons chancing to be in such places at that time of night, that they must leave without being compelled to do so. His brother, of Grenoble, capped this, by announcing—No burial without religious rites would be permitted except with the express wish of the deceased; displaying as much consideration for the defunct as the officials of the War Department did in ordering that "Whenever a soldier on half-pay shall die, or whenever a soldier shall be placed upon half-pay, he shall be informed of it by the War Minister." Impracticable rules are easily made; it is not so easy to make a regulation defying evasion, a feat accomplished by the authorities of Denver, when they notified all travellers over the town bridge that, "No vehicle, drawn by more than one animal, is allowed to cross this bridge in opposite directions at the same time."

A clerical landowner, finding his warrens were poached while he preached, sought to insure his game a quiet Sunday by warning offenders in this wise:—"Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Beware, my friends, your names are all known. If you trespass on these fields, or touch my rabbits, you will be prosecuted according to the law." The reverend rabbit-preserver was not inclined to make nice distinctions like the turnip-grower, who politely intimated—"Ladies and gentlemen are requested not to steal the turnips; other persons, if detected, will be prosecuted." And he might have taken a lesson in liberality from the gentleman who put up a board inscribed—"Ten shillings reward. Any person found trespassing on these lands or damaging these fences, on conviction, will receive the above reward." It may be questioned if he would have been as true to his word as the Aberdeen factor who was wont to jog the memory of a laggard tenant with—

To avoid all proceedings unpleasant,
I beg you will pay what is due;
If you do, you'll oblige me at present;
If you don't, why, I'll oblige you!

Equally uncompromising were the rampant Protectionists responsible for the following caution to the public, which appeared in a London newspaper in 1798:—"There is great reason to believe that there is at this time some foreign manufactured muffs and other velvets brought into this kingdom. The public should be very cautious how they buy, as there is, by the late Act of Parliament, a penalty of one hundred pounds for every piece or remnant, with a forfeiture thereof, and everything with it; and as the journeymen weavers (who are such great sufferers) have appointed some of their number to patrole London, with full resolution to make public examples of every person who may be so unfortunate as to fall into their hands with foreign muffs, either in the streets, shops, &c.—From the body of Journeymen Velvet Weavers. N.B.—The difference is so great between the English and foreign, that any person is able to distinguish." This, at all events, is plain English, which cannot be said of the notice lately posted at a Welsh railway station:—"List of booking. You passengers must careful. For have their level money for tickets, and to apply at once for asking tickets when will booking window open; no tickets to have after departure of the train." Why, our Japanese admirers can do better than that, for, although "The trees cutting, birds and beasts killing, and cows and horses setting in free at the ground belonging to the government are forbidden," might be improved upon, no Englishman would misunderstand the drift of Osaka Fu's decree, whatever the natives may make of it.

No writer of stories with a purpose ever succeeded so thoroughly as Foote, when he invented his tale of the Grand Panjandrum for Macklin's discomfiture, which remains unsurpassed as a piece of pure nonsense; but a Lahore hotel-keeper's notice to his customers would serve equally well as a mnemonic test, for we might safely "bet our pile" against any of his patrons finding a place in their memory for such a wondrous example of English composition as this:—"Gentlemen who come in hotel not say anything about their meals they will be charged for, and if they should say beforehand that they are going out to breakfast or dinner, &c., and if they say that they have not anything to eat, they will be charged, and if not so, they will be charged, or unless they bring it to the notice of the manager of the place; and should they want to say anything, they must order the manager for, and not anyone else, and unless they not bring it to the notice of the manager, they will charge for the least things according to the hotel rate, and no fuss will be allowed afterwards about it. Should any gentleman take wall-lamp or candle-light from the public rooms, they must pay for it without any dispute its charges. Monthly gentlemen will have to pay my fixed rate made with them at the time, and should they absent day in the month, they will not be allowed to deduct anything out of it, because I take from them less rate than my usual rate of monthly charges." A merrier-minded host put up in his bar, in Virginia City, Nevada, this bill of instructions:—"Drink plain drinks; buy them at the bar; eat a light lunch; pay coin for what you get; drink light, but often; ask all your friends to drink; don't bring toothpicks; don't try to spar the bar-keeper; keep six-shooters uncocked; don't steal the papers; be virtuous and you will be happy." We trust it was not to this worthy's door the notice was affixed "This hotel is closed on account of a difference between the proprietor and the cook, which was settled by pistols, and sent the proprietor to the grave and the cook to the gaol."

Not long ago, the girls of a Maine factory, rather than submit to a reduction of wages, gave the millowners a month's notice, and at the same time issued a notice to the public in general, and the masculine public in particular, in these words:—"We are now working out our notice: can turn our hands to most anything; don't like to be idle, but determined not to work for nothing when folks can afford pay. Who wants help? We can make bonnets, dresses, puddings, pies; knit, roast, stew, and fry; make butter and cheese, milk cows and feed chickens, hoe corn, sweep out the kitchen, put the parlour to rights, make beds, split wood, kindle fires, wash and iron, besides being remarkably fond of babies; in fact, can do most anything the most accomplished housewife is capable of doing, not forgetting the scoldings on Mondays or Saturdays. For specimens of our spirit we'll refer you to our overseers. Speak quick! Black eyes, fair foreheads, clustering locks, beautiful as Hebe; can sing like a seraph, and smile most bewitchingly. An elderly gentleman, who wants a good housekeeper, or a nice young man in want of a wife—willing to sustain either character—in fact, we are in the market. Who bids! Going, going, gone! Who's the lucky man?" If these Maine girls be ordinary samples of the American factory girls, no wonder Sam Slick's friend put a notice over his gates at Lowell—"No cigars or Irishmen admitted within these walls," and pleaded in justification that "the one would set a flame agoing among the cottons, and the other among the gals."

WAS IT I?

In the morning the light breezes shiver,
  The soft cloudlets flit o'er the sky;
Who ran in her mirth by the river?
  Was it I? Was it I?
Whose voice rang out, as clear and gay,
As the joyous breath of the wakening day;
Who cheered the dog to the flashing leap,
Where the pebbles shone and the banks were steep;
Who lay on the daisies to watch the lark
Lose its twinkling wings in the great blue arc;
Who laughed at the brown hares darting by?
Was it I? Was it I?

In the sunset the lithe willows quiver,
  The rose-tint is flooding the sky;
Who loitered of old by the river?
  Was it I? Was it I?
Who watched the blue forget-me-nots gleam,
And the water-lilies float on the stream;
Who blushed as a strong arm drew them near,
And a low voice whispered close and dear,
How fair the waxen flowers would show,
'Mid the golden braids in the ball-room's glow?
Oh! the happy silence, hushed and shy,
Was it I? Was it I?

The black ice-bands crackle and shiver,
  As the pale wintry sun lights the sky;
Who stands by the cold sullen river?
  Is it I? Is it I?
With hair that is touched by the fallen snow,
And a step that was eager, long ago;
Ah me! since then its faltering tread
Has followed the train of beloved dead,
And has learnt the watcher's cautious ways,
And must needs go softly all its days.
And memory owns, with a patient sigh,
It was I! It is I!

THE RED HOUSE.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

They were not nice lodgings, certainly. But what could I do? The place was full; no others could be found. You see it was the week of the assizes; about the dullest town in England had therefore become lively all on a sudden, putting from it for a while the cares usually oppressing it touching the woolstapling trade, the state of the corn market, and bucolic interests generally. The judges were hard at work in the courts beside the town-hall, trying cases and sentencing convicts. Wigs and gowns had become common objects of the High-street and the Market-place; the Bar had secured possession of all the lodgings that could anyhow be discovered. One eminent Q.C. was to be found on a confined first-floor over a barber's shop; a distinguished serjeant-at-law had established himself at the greengrocer's round the corner; rising juniors were dispersed all over the town.

So I had to do the best I could. I wanted a bed-room, and a room that I could convert into a sort of office, with a spacious table in it upon which I could spread out my drawings and plans. I was employed, I may state, in constructing the new line of railway, which, passing within a quarter of a mile of the town, crossed the river, bored through the hills beyond, and so forced its way into Wales.

In reply to repeated inquiries I learnt, at length, that I might possibly hear of lodgings at the Red House; but this was not very confidently said. And my interlocutors, as it seemed to me, dropped their voices and looked askance when they made mention of the Red House. Still they averred it was the best they could do for me. I couldn't miss it, I was told: a square red-brick house outside the town, close to the gasworks; anyone would point it out to me.

I found it readily enough. It looked something like an old farmhouse unaccountably transplanted from the open country to a dingy suburb. In truth, its situation was as disagreeable as well could be. Towering gasometers overshadowed it, poisoning the air; it was half washed by a slimy green stagnant pool; it was neighboured by numberless little rows of shabby, stunted dwelling-places—such as are cheaply run up for artisan occupation. Nevertheless, the house itself possessed a certain picturesqueness in right of the pleasant patches of moss and lichen, and the ragged mask of ivy, screening its weather-stained red face; its high roof interrupted here and there by gable-ends, and its soaring chimney-stacks of handsome design and proportions. All was in a deplorable state of decay, however; the slates were slipping one by one down the steep incline of the roof; the need of paint, whitewash, and cleansing was everywhere manifest; there was scarcely a whole window in the house, and the many broken panes were either left broken or untidily mended with paper, rags, or odd fragments of deal board. The garden was neglected—a wilderness of weeds, with rank grass growing thickly over the uneven, ill-kept path; of the palings that had once inclosed it, few remained. Altogether the place wore a woe-begone aspect—it looked blighted, poverty-stricken, squalid, uncanny.

There was neither bell nor knocker. I rapped on the door with my walking-stick. A man opened it—a middle-aged man, shabbily and slovenly dressed, with his scowling, coarse-featured face half hidden by a ragged iron-grey beard, and long, thick, dusty hair that tumbled over his forehead to his eyebrows.

"Lodgings?" he repeated after me, when I had mentioned to him the object of my visit. "We don't let lodgings. Not but what we've a deal more room here than we want."

"Then why not let lodgings?" I ventured to observe.

"Why not indeed?" he said, gazing at me rather stupidly and tugging at his beard. "Who sent you here?" he inquired presently.

I told him I had been busy all the morning searching for lodgings, and that a chance person I had met in the streets, in reply to my inquiries, had bid me try at the Red House.

"Was it the master?"

"Who's the master?"

"No, it couldn't well be," he muttered, lost in thought, and tumbling his rough hair into increased disorder by passing his dingy fingers through it. "The master's at work;" here he permitted himself a curious sort of chuckle; "it wasn't like him to send you here. It's about the last thing he'd think of doing."

"Well, can I have the lodgings?" I asked again, bringing him back to the proper subject of our discourse.

"You've been hoaxed, young man. This ain't a lodging-house—not to say a regular lodging-house. Someone's been making a fool of you."

"There's no great harm done, anyhow," I said. "I'm sorry to have troubled you."

"Oh, it's no trouble. Stay a bit." I was moving away, but on his saying this I turned towards him again. "You would pay for lodgings, supposing we made room for you?"

"Of course I'd pay."

"Handsomely?"

"Reasonably."

"And you wouldn't mind making shift a bit, seeing that we're not used to letting lodgings—that we're quite new to the business?"

"I could make anything do, almost. Shelter and room to turn round in; I don't want much more than that."

"We could manage that, I think. But you'll find us rough—the master and me—I warn you of that. So don't say I didn't, afterwards. We're a queer lot, an uncommon queer lot we are. You'll have to put up with a deal. I suppose you can contrive to do without a lady's-maid for a while?" he said, with a grim kind of sneer. "We can't pretend to do much waiting on you."

"You don't keep a servant?"

"Well, we don't. An old body comes to tidy up and help now and then—to scrub or scour, wash or iron, or what not. She'd do any mortal thing for a glass of gin, would that old 'ooman. You'd think her a witch to look at. We'll get her to make your bed; it will be but a shakedown, you understand; for the Red House isn't what it used to be, and things has got into a good deal of confusion inside. I ain't certain as I can lay my hand on anything in the shape of bed-room furniture, linen or counterpanes, or the likes of that. But I'll do the best I can for you. Shall you be wanting your boots blacked? Well, I'm pretty sure there's a blacking-brush somewheres about. As for towels—well, we must find something for you. Master and me ain't very particular, you see. We're used to roughing it, and making things do, and getting along anyhows. For my part, I don't mind owning I'm more comfortable-like when I'm dirty than when I'm clean. Still I think I could find you a morsel of yaller soap, if I only gave my mind to it. The master likes to have something of a clean-up now and then, when the fit takes him. He's what you call a curious character, is the master, take him all round."

"And you and he are the only tenants of this large house?"

"Yes, that's about it. Come along inside and look about you."

CHAPTER II.

I FOLLOWED him into the house. He was careful to close, and even to bar, the door after us.

The ruinous look characterising the exterior was fully present within. All was dirt and decay. The air was laden with dust, and with close, unwholesome odours. The rooms were carpetless; the floors uneven and shattered, as though the boards had been splintered by violent ill-usage, or rent away altogether; the ceilings were black with dirt and smoke; the walls were cracked and blistered, or stained with large patches of green mould. There were spacious rooms on the right and left as we entered. Of these I had but a glimpse through the half-open doors. One appeared to be used as a kitchen. Both were almost bare of furniture; unprovided with blinds or window-curtains, and exceedingly dirty. The staircase was broad and of an old-fashioned, substantial character, of dark oak apparently. But there had been cruel maltreatment of the carved balusters; many had departed altogether; certain of the others looked as though they had been hacked with a knife, or battered with a mallet.

"This would be about the thing for you, I should say, when it's a trifle brushed up and put to rights. There's a lock and key to the door, you see, all complete. You wouldn't find that everywhere."

He led the way as he spoke into a large room on the first-floor, and threw open the shutters that I might the better view the accommodation offered me.

"The bed-room is through that door yonder."

It was a cheerless place. A few ragged moth-eaten scraps of carpet strewed the floor. There was but little furniture; a table in the centre and three or four chairs, all exhibiting signs of ill-treatment and decay; with evidence, nevertheless, that they had originally been of a good, substantial, and even costly kind. The dust lay very thickly upon the creaking, shattered floor, as, indeed, upon every object in the room.

"Will it do?"

"Well—I must try and make it do, I suppose."

"We can clean it up a bit, maybe."

"It would stand a good deal of cleaning."

"But you haven't seen the bed-room. Take care; there's a step down. That board 's a little unsteady; perhaps I might find a nail somewheres to fix it for you. It's rather dark, this room. The window 's small, and the gasometer outside blocks out the light so. But it's what one might call a snug sort of room."

"One might call it that, certainly, but it wouldn't be particularly true. Well, what rent do you want for this precious accommodation?"

"Would five shillings a week hurt you?" he asked, after an interval of severe self-communing the while he had scrutinised me from under his bushy eyebrows and falling locks of hair, tugged at his beard, and even thrust a handful of it into his mouth, torn it with his teeth, and laboured apparently to consume it altogether.

It was agreed that I was to pay five shillings a week rent for the rooms, and I was to enter upon possession of them forthwith, with a proviso that some measures were to be taken in the direction of cleaning and repairing.

"And, mind. I've let 'em to you, not the master. You pay the money to me, and not to him. He's naught to do with it. It's no sort of affair of his. If he should try it on, don't you be persuaded to let him have sight of your money."

"And your name is——"

"My name is Mark Voss. I'm not ashamed on it. Mark Voss. Do you hear?"

"And the master, as you call him. What's his name?"

"What's that matter, to you or to any one? Call him 'the master' as I do. Isn't that name enough? Can't you make that do?" He spoke very angrily.

I said I'd try and make it do; that it didn't matter a straw to me what his name was. And so I departed.

My luggage had been left at the railway station. I engaged a porter to wheel it on a truck to the Red House. He stared at me.

"You know it?"

"I know it fast enough. But it seems a strange place for you to be putting up at, my young master. The Red House of all houses in the world! I've been in this town a many years now, but I never before was asked to wheel luggage down to the Red House!"

CHAPTER III.

Mark Voss was as good as his word. When I returned in the evening, he was carrying out our provision that something should be done towards cleaning the place. He had taken off his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves; he was busily plying a mop, having first emptied a bucket of water on the floor. I cannot say I think he was doing much good.

The bed-room certainly did not look inviting. A tressle-bed, covered with a patchwork counterpane, stood in a corner. The sheets were ragged, of very coarse texture, and not merely damp—they were wringing wet. Fortunately, I possessed a good supply of railway rugs, which I could substitute for the sheets. There was a rickety washing-stand; a dirty, mildewed chest of drawers. I was prepared to rough it. I knew that my stay in the place could be but brief; that for some hours every day I needs must be absent from the Red House. And I had a youthful ability to sleep under almost any circumstances. My dilapidated rooms and their decayed furniture, the Red House and my strange landlord, Mark Voss, afforded me, indeed, considerable amusement. My curiosity was somewhat roused, and I was supplied with abundant opportunities for indulging in conjecture and speculation.

My sitting-room window commanded a view of the desolate, wild, and neglected garden; the bed-room window looked on to the gasworks. I could see from neither the main entrance to the house.

Mark ceased from his toil. He refreshed himself with a draught from a wicker flask he carried in his pocket. An odour of whisky pervaded the chamber. His face was very red from hard work, and, as I now perceived, from drink. His speech had become indistinct and his gait unsteady.

"You'll do now. I don't know when I had such a tough job. But you're all right and tidy now."

"Is 'the master' in yet?"

"Not yet," he answered, with an oath. "But he'll be back soon enough, come when he may. The cur—the coward—the miserable sneaking fool! I hate the master! I should like——"

Failing in words to express his desire, he resorted to violent gestures, importing the infliction of severe chastisement, the while he ground his teeth and emitted angry, animal noises. Soon after he withdrew.

Who was this man, I asked myself. What had he been? What was his position in life? A sailor? Possibly. He had rather a rolling gait; there were elaborate devices—in which figured initial letters, mermaids, anchors, and true lovers' knots—tattooed, I had noticed, upon his brawny arms. And yet the man had scarcely the aspect or the ways of a sailor, either. The unwholesome redness of his face was not the result of exposure to sun and wind. It seemed to me that whisky had much more to do with it.

And who was the man he called "the master," and abused so fiercely, and hated, as it appeared, so bitterly? What had brought these two men together? What induced them to live in so dilapidated a building?

As yet I had not seen "the master." I was occupying myself with rearranging my rooms, with a view to their better appearance and my increased comfort. I had discovered some coals in a cupboard, and some fragments of wood. It was not cold, but still the place was very damp, and I thought a fire would be cheering; so, with some difficulty, I lit one. The chimney smoked vexatiously at first; but by-and-by the flames blazed and crackled pleasantly, and I was gratified with my performance. I drew the easiest chair I could find to the front of the grate; there was no fender, so I rested my slippered feet upon the hobs. I lit a cigar.

Presently I could hear some one enter below. "The master," probably. Angry talking followed. Mark and the master were quarrelling—reviling, swearing at, threatening each other. Then came the sound of a footstep upon the stairs. A man entered my room.

"What do you do here?" he demanded, angrily. "I won't have it. You must get out of this. You've no business here."

He was very pale, with long, light hair—a man of about thirty, perhaps, of handsome features, although his face was worn by ill-health, or, it might be, dissoluteness of life. He was shabbily dressed; his clothes were soiled and torn; his shirt-collar was ragged, and the frayed ends of a rusty black neckerchief, tied in a slovenly bow, straggled out untidily; his waistcoat was held together but by few remaining buttons; his boots were split and miry. And yet there was a certain air of refinement about the man. Violent as he was, negligent and almost squalid of appearance, he seemed to me one fallen from a more prosperous condition—one of gentle origin, upon whom some strange ill-fortune had borne very hardly.

He was trembling with passion. His long thin hands were waved in the air as he spoke; his eyes were bloodshot; his lips colourless.

I replied to him as calmly as I could, explaining the circumstances that brought me to the Red House. I stated that I had engaged the rooms of Mark Voss for a week at the rent he had determined.

"Mark Voss, indeed!" he screamed with an oath. "I'll Mark Voss him. The insolent beggar! The lying hound. Is it his house? Is he master here? What right has he to do this? How dare he take upon himself to act in this way. A pretty thing, indeed! But it shan't be. I won't have it."

I interrupted him. I begged him to be calm. I assured him that if there had been any mistake—that if my stay in the house occasioned him any inconvenience, I would assuredly take my departure as soon as possible—early on the following morning, if I could so manage it.

He seemed pacified. "I'm not complaining of you," he said. "It's not your fault, I know. It's all that infernal Mark. What rent did he ask you?"

"Five shillings."

"The villain! The lying, extortionate scoundrel. Five shillings to be spent in drink, that's what it means. But it shan't be. You shan't pay him a farthing, mind that. I say it. I'm master here. Stay here if you like in the old house—it's a wretched den of a place when all's said—but stay as my guest; mine, you understand. I'm a nice person to talk of entertaining a guest, I know; and this is a pretty place, this Red House, to entertain a guest in!" He laughed bitterly. "But, blackguard as I look, and am, for that matter, I was a gentleman once; at least," he added in an altered tone, "folks so counted me. For my part, I think I was bad right through from the beginning, though not, perhaps, so bad as I am now."

He had grown calmer now. He spoke, looking at the fire, with a contemplative, reminiscent air. He moved towards a chair. Before, as I believe, he was quite conscious of what he was doing, he had taken up my cigar-case and drawn from it a cigar. Suddenly, with a slight flush upon his face, he returned it to the case and thrust that far from him.

"Pray light a cigar," I said, and I formally proffered him the case.

"No," he said, as he rose. "It wouldn't be right. I'm not fit to be sitting here with you. If you knew all, you'd say so too. I know what I've come to, and my proper place; the cellar or the kennel with Mark Voss for company. I'll go now. You're welcome to such shelter as this beastly den affords, pray understand that, without paying a sou for it, whatever Mark Voss may say. Good night!"

He bowed and quitted the room, closing the door after him.

"What, you here, you vagabond!" I heard him saying outside, almost immediately. "What do you mean by dogging me and trying to listen at keyholes?"

"I thought you might get blabbing," Mark Voss answered.

There was the sound of a scuffle carried on great part of the way down the staircase. In the passage below the conflict continued.

I went out on the landing. "What is the matter. What are you doing?"

There was silence for a few moments.

"It's nothing, nothing," Mark Voss said, "only 'the master's' just a little troublesome to-night. He gets a bit flighty at times. It's one of his bad nights to-night. Lock your door. Do you hear? Whatever you do, be sure you lock your door."

I heard "the master" abusing his companion in a low voice. There was much discussion between them.

Presently they parted. Mark withdrew to the kitchen. The master entered the opposite room on the right-hand side of the staircase.

I could hear them both noisily locking, bolting, and barring their doors. Each seemed to regard the other as a dangerous wild beast to be kept apart from. There was, as I judged, bitter hatred between them; distrust and suspicion; and yet they lived together, the only tenants of the Red House, with myself for a while their lodger or their guest. Which? But it did not much matter which.

I was very careful to lock my door. However, the night passed away quietly enough.

FASCINATION AND THE EVIL EYE.

THE word "fascination" has both a good and a bad meaning: the one due to Nature, and the other, to Superstition. As commonly understood, and in its favourable sense, fascination depends upon manner, appearance, and conversation; but, in reality, upon the soul that looks from the eloquent eyes.

The fascination of the eye is not confined to one sex; for the tender light that beams from the countenance of a man, under the stimulus of affection, has as much influence over the heart and imagination of women, at the susceptible period of life, as the softer eye of woman has over man's at the same period. But, irrespective of love, or even of hate, there is a magnetism in the fixed look of a resolute and intellectual eye, which exerts itself independently of the will or knowledge of the person on whom it may be directed, as most people have experienced, when, made suddenly and instinctively aware of some unusual sensation, they have looked up and found a friend's or a stranger's gaze fixed intently upon them. This fascination was described by Catherine of Medicis as that of the strong soul over the weak—an assertion which cannot be accepted without qualification, for the strongest mind can be affected by this mysterious agency as well as the weakest, if the sympathetic influences be favourable. This magnetic power or fascination—whichever it may be called—has not received the same attention from the bulk of mankind as the eye-power of hate, or the magnetism of repulsion. The glance that attracts has been accepted as we accept the sunlight or the flowers; but the glance that repels has passed into the domain of superstition. The glance of the good eye has been but little thought of except by lovers; but the glance of the evil eye, or that which is supposed to be evil, took possession of the minds of the multitude, and the belief in its effects has exercised a malign influence over the weak and credulous from the very earliest times, and among all the tribes and nations of the earth.

Everyone has heard of the three Gorgons of Greek mythology, and of Medusa, the best-known personage among them, the glance of whose eye had the power of turning into stone everyone upon whom it was directed. The name of the Gorgons, or Gorgones, usually supposed to be derived from the Greek word "gorgos," fierce, may be drawn, with more probability, from the mythology of the Egyptians and Phœnicians, from whom the Greeks borrowed so much. In that ancient speech, which lies at the root of all the Celtic languages of Europe, it signifies "the witch, or mad woman, with the evil eye;" from "Gorach," a mad woman, and "Gon," to hurt with the evil eye; whence "Gorach-gon," or "Gorgon," and "Goineideach," one bewitched, or Gorgonised.

There was lately disposed of at Messrs. Christie and Manson's, in the collection of the Duke of Marlborough, an antique gem, with the head of Medusa, a drawing of which, greatly enlarged, was engraved for the second volume of the Analysis of Ancient Mythology, by Jacob Bryant (London, 1807). The ancient artist who cut this matchless gem caught the whole spirit of the fable, and represented in the awful countenance, with "the snakes in the wavy hair," the very ideal of all wickedness, horror, and despair, as if he had known—which he possibly did—that the ancient word, which the Greeks had softened into Medusa, was "Mi-dhocasach," despairing. Pliny speaks of "those among the Triballians and Illyrians, who with their very eyesight can kill those whom they look wistfully upon for any long time;" and Plutarch states on the authority of Philaretus that "the Thybiens who inhabited Pontus were deadly, not only to babes but to men grown, and that whomsoever their eye, speech, or breath would reach were sure to fall sick and pine away." It is known, he adds, in another passage, that "friends and servants have fascinating (or evil) eyes, and that there are even fathers to whose protracted gaze mothers will not expose their children." It was seldom that the superstition of early times invested men with the power of the Evil Eye. Just as in the mediæval ages and in the present day, wherever the idea of sorcery still lingers—a much larger space than is generally supposed—there are few wizards, but many witches. Occasionally, a man is supposed to possess the evil eye—the superstition is current in Italy with regard to Pope Pius the Ninth—but, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the persons supposed to wield the power of inflicting death or calamity by a glance of the eye, are women, young or old. Popular superstition has generally divided them into two classes: those who involuntarily and innocently possess the fatal power, and are unconscious of its exercise; and those who knowingly acquired it by compact with the powers of darkness, and take a fiendish delight in exercising it against all who offend them. The maleficent power has been known by several English words. It is to "eye-bite," to "over-look," and to "take." The French and Italians simply call it fascination in the evil sense of the word; the Germans, the "scheelauge," or squint-eye, ascribing the power to a squint; and the "zauberblick," or enchanted glance. To "take," in Shakespeare, means to blast or blight by witchcraft. In King Lear, Act II., Scene 4, occurs the imprecation, "Strike her young bones, you taking airs, with lameness!" He says of Herne the Hunter, in the Merry Wives of Windsor, that he

Blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,
And makes milch kine yield blood.

In Hamlet, speaking of Christmas-time, he says:

The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

Eye-biting is defined in Nomenclator, 1585, as "bewitching," "a disease wherewith children waxe leane and pine away; the original whereof, they in olde time referred to the crooked and wrye lookes of envious and malicious people." In a work, called Adey's Candle in the Dark, quoted in Nares's Glossary, occurs the passage: "Master Scot, in his Discoverie, telleth us that our English people i' Ireland, whose posterity were lately barbarously cut off, were much given to this idolatry in the queene's time, insomuch that there being a disease among their cattle, that grew blinde, being a common disease in that country, they did commonly execute people for it, calling them eye-biting witches."

The Irish "eye-biters" used rhymes and imprecations to effect their purpose, like the witches in Macbeth; and, in Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft, are said to have been able to rhyme either beast or man to death.

"Overlook" appears to be a word in use among the Irish. "A certain woman," says Mr. Graham Dalzell, in his Darker Superstitions of Scotland, "who was tried at Youghal, in Ireland, in the year 1661, for bewitching Mary Langden, denied the fact, though admitting that she might have 'overlooked' her. Between these, she said, there was a great difference, for, unless by touching her, she could not have done her any harm;" whereupon Glanvil (The Discovery of Witchcraft) says, "How 'overlooking' and 'bewitching' are distinguished by this fraternity I know not."

"Overlook," in the Irish sense, is still used, as appears from a newspaper paragraph in June of the present year (1875), which states that an Irish woman, named Rafferty, was charged at the police-court in Liverpool with assaulting another woman, named Burke. Mrs. Rafferty, being much annoyed by a report which, she alleged, had been circulated by Mrs. Burke, that Mrs. Rafferty had an "evil eye" and had "overlooked" a child, showed her displeasure at this calumny by throwing a stone at Mrs. Burke, which struck her in the face and inflicted a severe wound. In reply to an inquiry by the magistrate, Mrs. Rafferty explained that by "overlooking" a child was meant the killing of the infant by looking at it, and at the same time wishing it dead.

According to the ancient, but by no means exploded, superstition, which was as common to Egypt, Phœnicia, Greece, and Rome, as to the natives of modern Europe, Asia, Africa, and even to the aboriginal tribes of North and South America, there was no limit to the mischief that could be inflicted by the malevolent owner of the evil eye. He or she could inflict death or any form of disease; could prevent marriages; could lay waste the possessions of the husbandman, and blight the corn and the vine; could destroy cattle, render cows and ewes barren; turn milk to blood; cover the body with sores and ulcers, and bring down any imaginable calamity. In the trial of Janet Irving for witchcraft in 1616, it was deposed that Satan himself taught her "that if she bore ill-will to anybody, she was to look upon them with (wide) opened eyes, and pray evil for them in his name, when she would get her heart's desire." In France, Italy, and Spain, as well as in the British Isles, and possibly all over Europe, there are at this day mendicants supposed to possess the evil eye, to whom it is considered highly dangerous to refuse alms, and who, in consequence, carry on a more profitable trade than their brethren. "In various quarters," says Mr. Graham Dalzell, "ready acquiescence yet attends the importunity of the mendicant, from dreading the consequences of refusal; and should an uncouth aspect and demeanour be conjoined with his vocation, objects of interest and affection are carefully withdrawn from his gaze. Children are thought the most susceptible of injury."

A peculiar form of this ghastly superstition was, that the praise of a person with the evil eye was considered as deadly as his curse. Zallony, in his Eastern Travels, 1835, describes the terror that takes possession of the Greeks, Turks, and Jews of the Grecian Archipelago, when any one praises the health, beauty, or goodness of their wives or children, lest the utterer of the praise should possess the evil eye. "God preserve it!" is the immediate ejaculation, which is thought to ward off all possible evil; and sometimes, if the danger is thought to be more than usually imminent, the affrighted person puts his or her finger in the mouth to moisten it with saliva, and makes the sign of the cross upon the forehead of the beloved object who is threatened with evil. In Scotland the believers in the evil eye did not like their children or their cattle to be praised. Such commendation was only to be counteracted by a pious invocation to Heaven to avert the evil, and by spitting. "If evil followed the praise of a horse," says Mr. Dalzell, "the Lord's Prayer was whispered in the animal's ear; and old women were invited to restore the health of fascinated horses by their prayers."

The cockatrice, or basilisk—an imaginary creature, with the body of a serpent and the head of a cock—was supposed to have so deadly an eye as to kill by its look. Shakespeare makes Romeo speak of the "death-darting eye of cockatrice;" and in Twelfth Night Sir Toby Belch says, "This will so fright them, that they will kill by the look like cockatrices." The word was afterwards applied to women who allured men to destruction by their heartless extravagance; in which sense it is used by Ben Jonson and other writers of his time, and is personified in the "Fair Serpent" by a poet of our own day:

Many a noble bosom
  Has that scaly serpent stung,
With the darting of its eye-light
  And the witchery of its tongue.
And to feed it and amuse it,
  And pamper its greedy maw,
Many a goodly heirship
  Has gone like the ice in thaw.

The supposed liability of the innocent multitude to the malevolence of the evil eye caused the superstitious to have recourse to many charms, incantations, and ceremonies to avert ill consequences and render the poisoned glance innocuous; among which, as just recorded, prayer and the use of saliva were conspicuous. The wearing of coral brooches, beads, and earrings is still a popular charm in Naples against the evil eye. "In Scotland," says Mr. Graham Dalzell, in his Addenda, "a red thread tied about a child's neck, or a rowan cross (cross of mountain ash), are believed to be equally efficacious in preventing the influence of evil spirits, evil eyes, and other calamities." In the middle ages, an amulet, of a lozenge shape, marked with the mystic letters A B R A C A D A B R A, was worn in the bosom as a certain specific. A cross formed of the wood of the elder-tree, affixed to cow-houses and stables, was supposed to protect the cattle from all possible harm. A branch of the rowan-tree was also in great favour, and to hold up but a branch or twig, in presence of an eye-biter, was sufficient to render her deadliest wishes of no avail. A four-leaved shamrock, which is excessively rare, and all the more highly prized for that reason, was a sovereign antidote. In Pocock's Travels in the East, he says that the Arabs of Egypt threw salt into the fire as a charm against the effects of an evil eye, or before loading their camels for a journey through the Desert, concluding, as the blue flame arises, that every evil genius is banished. The ejection of saliva was also considered a charm of peculiar efficacy. Pliny speaks of it as a certain antidote to "fascination," as well as a preservative from contagion, and in pugilistic encounters as certain to aggravate the violence of a blow. "At the present day, as of old," says Mr. Dalzell, "a Greek mother, as if commemorating the words of Theocritus and Tibullus, spits in her bosom to repel fascinating glances directed towards herself, and, dreading the gaze of the sterile on her child, spits in its face." But the most common of all the charms in use against the evil eye is that very vulgar gesture of applying the thumb to the nose, stretching out the fingers, and "twiddling" them with a rapid motion for a few seconds, commonly practised by London street-boys, without the slightest knowledge of its origin or meaning, and known in slang parlance as "taking a sight." The Slang Dictionary says that "to take a sight" is a vulgar action employed by boys and others to denote incredulity or contempt for authority;" but the real meaning in ancient times, forgotten and wholly unsuspected in our own, was to show contempt and defiance of the machinations of witchcraft, and to render the evil eye powerless. This is the action that so offends the good-natured Pio Nono, not for itself, but as a manifestation of the public opinion, that he possesses, independently of his will, a power that he would be the last to exercise designedly. This vulgar sign, modern as it looks, is as old as Egyptian civilisation, and was known, as tracings upon the unearthed walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum abundantly prove, to the streetboys and other vulgar inhabitants of those ancient cities.

In hitherto unsuspected connection with this subject there occurs a word in Boccaccio, and afterwards in Milton, which shows the mysterious terror associated with the evil eye. The word is "Demogorgon," used by Boccaccio in his Genealogy of the Gods, and called by Dr. Bentley "a silly word," invented by that author. But this, according to Nares's Glossary, was an error, as it was mentioned by Lutatius or Lactantius Placidus, the scholiast on Statius. It was supposed to be derived from Demi-urgus, and drawn from the oriental system of magic. Milton uses the word in the second book of Paradise Lost:

> With him enthroned
> Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things,
> The consort of his reign; and by them stood
> Orcus and Hades, and the dreaded name
> Of Demogorgon.

Spenser, in the Faerie Queen, says of Night:

> Thou wast begot in Demogorgon's Hall,
> And saw'st the secrets of the world unrolled.

Ben Jonson, unaware of its earlier origin, in the Alchemist speaks:

> Boccace's Demogorgon, thousands more,
> All abstract riddles of our store.

Tasso alludes to the awful name without mentioning it. This so much dreaded word, erroneously supposed to be derived from "demon" and the Greek "gorgos"—fierce, or fearful—was not known to the Greeks or Romans, but is a relic of the Celtic period in Europe, and a corruption of the Celtic or Gaelic words "Dion-mi-gorach-gon"—"Defend me [from] the witch with the evil eye." The original meaning had been lost in the middle ages; and on the principle of "Omne ignotum pro magnifico," the word was held to be something peculiarly solemn, mysterious, and awful. Such it doubtless appeared to Boccaccio and Tasso, to Spenser, and to Milton, and thus served the purposes of poetry when it had been lost to popular comprehension. It has now quite disappeared, though, unfortunately, the superstition which gave rise to it still remains to exert its baleful influence over the minds of the ignorant and credulous, as well as over the minds of many men and women of education and refinement who have not been able to emancipate themselves entirely from the thraldom of the supernatural, but allow the supposed influences of the unseen and unknown world of demons and spirits to influence the convictions which they have not the courage to avow, and the fears which they are wise enough to confine to the secrecy of their own bosoms.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MINNIE BODKIN had not dismissed from her mind the rumours about Algernon Errington, which she had heard from the widow Thimbleby. After some consideration she resolved to speak to him directly on the subject, and decided on the manner of doing so.

"I will not try to speak to him in the presence of other people," she thought. "He would wriggle off and slip through my fingers, if he found the conversation had any tendency to become disagreeable. And then, too, it might be difficult to speak to him without interruption."

This latter consideration had reference to Minnie's observation of Mrs. Algernon, who never saw her husband engaged in conversation with Miss Bodkin without unceremoniously thrusting herself between them.

The result of Minnie's deliberations was the sending of the following note to the Whitford Post-office:—

"MY DEAR ALGERNON,—I want to say a word to you quietly. Can you come to me on your way home this afternoon? I will be ready to receive you at any hour between four and six. Don't disappoint your old friend, M. B."

At a few minutes before five that evening Mr. Ancram Errington presented himself at Dr. Bodkin's house, and was shown up to Minnie's room.

It was one of Minnie's good days. She was seated in her lounging-chair by the fire, but she was not altogether reclining in it—merely leaning a little back against the cushions. A small writing-table stood in front of her. It was covered with papers—amongst them a copy of the local newspaper—and she had evidently been busily occupied. When Algernon entered she held out her hand with a smile of welcome. "This is very good!" she exclaimed. "I was not sure that I should succeed in tearing your postmastership away from the multifarious duties——"

Algernon winced, and held up his hand. "Don't, Minnie!" he cried. "For mercy's sake, let me forget all that for half an hour!"

"Oh, reassure yourself, most overworked of public servants! It is not about the conveyance of his Majesty's mails that I am going to talk to you."

"Upon my word, I am infinitely relieved to hear it."

And indeed his countenance brightened at once, and he took a chair opposite to Minnie with all his old nonchalant gaiety.

"How you hate your office!" said Minnie, looking at him curiously. "More, even, than your native laziness—which I know to be considerable—would seem to account for."

"Not at all! There is no difficulty in accounting for my distaste for the whole business. There can be no difficulty. It is the simplest, most obvious thing in the world!"

"Don't things go smoothly? Have you any special troubles or difficulties in the office, Algernon?"

"Special troubles! My dear Minnie, what on earth are you driving at?"

"I am 'driving' at nothing more than the simple sense of my words implies," she answered, with a marked shade of surprise in her countenance. "I mean just what I say. Is your work going pretty smoothly? Have you any complaints? Does your clerk do well?"

"Oh, Gibbs? Capitally, capitally! Old Obadiah is a first-rate fellow. Did you know his name was Obadiah? Absurd name, isn't it? Oh yes; he's all right. I trust him entirely—blindly. He has the whole thing in his hands. He might do anything he liked in the office. I have every confidence in Gibbs. But now, Minnie, let us have done with the subject. If you had as much of it as I have you would understand——Come, dismiss the bugaboo, or I shall think you have entrapped me here to talk to me about the post-office. And I warn you I don't think I should be able to stand that, even from you!"

"How absurdly you are exaggerating, Algy," said Minnie, shaking her head at him, and yet smiling a little at the same time. "But be at peace. I have nothing to say on the subject of the Whitford post-office. My discourse will chiefly concern the Whitford postmaster, and——No! Don't be so ridiculous! not in his official capacity, either!"

"Oh! Well, in his private character, I should think it impossible to find a more delightful topic of conversation, than that interesting and accomplished individual," returned Errington, laughing and settling himself comfortably in his chair.

"I hope it may prove so. Tell me, first, how is Mrs. Algernon Ancram Errington?"

"Why, Castalia is not very well, I think, although I don't know what is the matter. She grows thinner and thinner, and sallower and sallower. Entre nous, Minnie, she frets and chafes against our life here. She has not the gift of looking on the bright side of things. She is rather peevish by nature. It's a little trying sometimes, coming on the back of all the other botherations. Ha! There!" (passing his hand quickly across his forehead) "let us say no more on that subject, either. And now to return to the interesting topic—the delightful and accomplished—eh? What have you to say to me?"

Minnie seized on the opportunity, which chance had afforded her, to introduce the matter she wished to speak about.

"Do you think your wife is annoyed by the importunities of tradespeople, Algy? That would be enough to fret her and sour her temper."

"Importunities of tradespeople? Good gracious, no! And, besides, I don't think Castalia would allow the importunities of tradespeople to disturb her much. I should fancy that a Bourbon princess could scarcely look on such folks from a more magnificent elevation than poor Castalia does. But, Que voulez-vous? She was brought up in that sort of hauteur."

"I quite believe in your wife's disregard for the feelings of the tradespeople," answered Minnie, drily. "But this is not a question of her own feelings, you see. Come, Algernon, may I take the privilege of our old friendship, and speak to you quite frankly?"

"Pray do, my dear Minnie. You know I always loved frankness."

He looked the picture of candour as he turned his bright blue eyes on his friend.

"Well then, to begin with a question. Do you not owe money to several persons in Whitford?"

"My dear Minnie, don't look so solemn, for mercy's sake! 'Owe money!' why I suppose everybody owes money. A few pounds would cover all my debts, I assure you I am never troubled on the subject."

"I am glad to hear it. But—will you forgive the liberty I am taking for the sake of my motive, and give me carte blanche to be as impertinent as I please?"

"With all my heart!" he answered unhesitatingly.

"Thanks, Algy. Then, to proceed without circumlocution: I am afraid that, since neither you nor your wife are accustomed to domestic economy, you may possibly be spending more money than is quite prudent, without being aware of it. You say you are not disturbed by your debts; but, Algy, I hear things on this subject which are never likely to reach your ears; or, at all events, not until it is too late for the knowledge of them to serve you. And I have reason to think that there is a good deal of unpleasant feeling among the Whitford tradespeople about you and yours."

"You will excuse me for observing that the Whitford tradespeople always have been, within my recollection, a set of pig-headed, prejudiced ignoramuses, and that I see no reason to apprehend any speedy improvement in the intelligence of that highly respectable body."

"Don't laugh, Algernon. The matter is serious. You have not been troubled yet, you say. But the trouble may begin at any moment, and I should wish you to be prepared to meet it. You may have bills sent in which——"

"Bills? Oh, as to that, there's no lack of them already! I must acknowledge the great alacrity and punctuality with which the mercantile classes of this town send in their weekly accounts. Oh dear yes, I have a considerable collection of those interesting documents; so many, in fact, that the other day, when Castalia was complaining of the shabbiness of the paper-hangings in our dining-room, I proposed to her to cover the walls with the tradesmen's bills. It would be novel, economical, and moral; a kind of memento mori—a death's head at the feast! Fancy seeing your butcher's bill glaring down above the roast mutton every day, and the greengrocer's 'to account delivered,' restraining the spoon, that might otherwise too lavishly dispense the contents of the vegetable dishes!"

"Algy, Algy!"

"Upon my honour, Minnie, I made the suggestion. But Castalia looked as grave as a judge. She didn't see it at all. The fact is, poor Cassy's sense of humour is merely rudimentary."

Minnie joined her hands together on the table, and thus supported, she leant a little forward, and looked searchingly at the young man.

"Algernon," she said with slow deliberation, "I begin to be afraid that the case is worse than I thought."

"What do you mean?" he asked,

almost roughly, and with a sudden change of colour.

"I mean that you really are in difficult waters. How has it come to pass that the weekly accounts have accumulated in this way?"

He laughed a little forced laugh, but he looked relieved, too.

"The process is simple. They keep sending 'em in!"

"And then it is said—forgive me if I appear intrusive—that you gave orders for wine and such things out of Whitford. And that does not incline the people of the place to be patient."

"Well, by Jove!" exclaimed Algernon, throwing himself back in his chair and thrusting his hands into his pockets, "that is the most absurd—the most irrational — the most preposterous reason for being angry with me! They grumble when I run up a bill with them, and they are affronted when I don't!"

"Does your wife understand—or—or control the household expenditure?"

"Bless you, no! She has not the very vaguest ideas of anything of the kind. When she had an allowance from her uncle for her dress, my lord used to have to come down every now and then with a supplementary sum of money to get her out of debt."

He spoke with an air of perfectly easy amusement, and without a trace of anxiety; unless, perhaps, an accustomed ear might have detected some constraint in his voice.

"But could she not be made to understand? Why not give her some hints on domestic economy? It should be done kindly, of course. And surely her own good sense—"

Algernon pursed up his mouth and raised his eyebrows.

"She considers herself an unexampled victim as it is. I think 'lessons on domestic economy' would about put the finishing stroke to the internal felicity of Ivy Lodge!"

Minnie looked pained. They were trenching here on ground on which she had no intention of venturing farther. It formed no part of her plan to be drawn into a discussion respecting the defects and shortcomings of Algernon's wife. She was silent.

Algernon got up from his chair, and came and stood before Minnie, taking both her hands in his.

"My dear girl," he said, "I cannot tell you how much I feel your kindness and friendship. But, now, pray don't look so terribly like the tragic muse! I assure you there is no need, as far as we are concerned. Castalia is perhaps a little extravagant; but, after all, what does it amount to? A few pounds would cover all I owe. The whole of our budget is a mere bagatelle. The fact is, you have attached too much importance to the chatter of these thick-headed boobies. They hate us, I suppose, because Castalia's uncle is a peer of the realm, and because we dine late, or for some equally excellent and conclusive reasons."

"I don't know that they hate you, Algy," returned Minnie, but not with an air of very perfect conviction. "And, after all, it is scarcely a proof of personal malignity to wish to be paid one's bill!"

Algernon laughed quite genuinely. "Oh yes it is!" he cried. "A proof of the direst malignity. What worse can they do?"

"Well, Algernon, I cannot presume to push my sermonisings any farther. You will give me credit at least for having ventured to make them from a single-minded wish to be of some service to you."

"My dear Minnie! you are the 'best fellow' in the world! You remember I used to call you so in my saucy, schoolboy days, and when your majesty condescended to permit my impertinences? And to show you how thoroughly I appreciate your friendship, I don't mind telling you that when I am removed from this d—— delightful berth that I now occupy, I shall have to get Uncle Seely to help us out a little. But I feel no scruple about that. Something is due to me. I ought never to have been placed here at all. Well, no matter! It was a mistake. My lord sees it now, and he is setting to work in earnest for me in other quarters. I have every reason to believe that I shall get very pretty promotion before long. It isn't my business to go about proclaiming this to the butchers and bakers, is it? And between you and me, Miss Bodkin, your dear Whitfordians are as great rogues as the tradesmen in town, and vastly less pleasant to deal with. They make us pay an enormous percentage for the trifling credit we take. So let 'em wait and be——paid! Dear Minnie, I assure you I shall not forget your affectionate kindness."

He bent down over her as he said the last words, still holding her hands. A change in Minnie's face made him look round, and when he did so, he saw his wife standing just within the room behind him.

Minnie was inexpressibly vexed with herself to feel a hot flush covering her face. She knew it would be misconstrued, and that made her colour the more. Mrs. Algernon Errington was the first to speak.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bodkin," she said; "I didn't know that you were so particularly engaged."

"What the deuce brought you here?" asked her husband, with a not altogether successful assumption of thinking the whole trio, including himself, completely at their ease.

"There was no one in the drawing-room nor in the study," continued Castalia, still addressing Minnie, "so I thought I would come direct to your room. I see now that I ought not to have taken that liberty."

"Well, frankly, I don't think you ought, my dear," said her husband, lightly.

Minnie was sorely tempted to say so too. But she felt that any show of anger on her part would but increase the unpleasantness of the situation, and a quarrel with Algernon's wife under such circumstances would have been equally revolting to her pride and her taste; so she held out her hand to Castalia with grave courtesy, and said, "I have to apologise, on my side, for having taken the privilege of old friendship to sermonise your husband a little. He will tell you what I have ventured to speak to him about. I hope you will forgive me."

Castalia appeared not to see the proffered hand. She stood quite still near the door as she answered, "Oh, I daresay it is all quite right. I don't suppose Ancram will tell me anything about it; I am not in his secrets."

"This is no secret, Mrs. Errington; at all events, not from you."

"Oh, I don't know. But I daresay it doesn't matter."

Through all the languid insolence of her manner there was discernible so much real pain of mind, that Minnie once more checked a severe speech, and answered gently, "You will judge of that. Of course Algernon will discuss the subject of our conversation with you."

Mrs. Algernon Errington scarcely condescended to return Minnie's parting salutation, but walked away, saying to her husband over her shoulder, "I am going to drive home. It is nearly dinner-time. I suppose you are coming? But don't let me interfere with your arrangements."

"Interfere with a fiddlestick!" cried Algernon, in the quick, testy tone that was the nearest approach to loss of temper Minnie had ever seen in him. Then he added after an instant, with a short laugh, "I don't know why I'm supposed not to include dinner in my 'arrangements' to-day of all days in the year!"

And then the husband and wife went away together, and entered the fly that awaited them before Dr. Bodkin's door.

"How did you know where to find me?" asked Algernon, suddenly, after a silent drive of some ten minutes.

"Oh, I knew you had a rendezvous."

"I had no 'rendezvous.' You could not know it!"

"Couldn't I? I tell you I saw that creature's letter. 'Dear Algernon!' What right has she to write to you like that?"

And Castalia burst into angry tears.

Algernon turned upon her eagerly.

"Saw her letter? Where? How?"

"I——they told me——It was at the office."

"You went to the office? And you saw Minnie's letter?"

"I—it's no use scolding me, or pretending to be injured. I know who is injured of us two."

"I suppose I must have left the note lying open on the table of my private office," said Algernon, speaking very distinctly, and not looking at his wife.

"Yes; that must be it! I—I—I tore it up. You will find the fragments on the floor, if you think them worth preserving."

"What a goose you are, Castalia!" exclaimed her husband, leaning back in the carriage and closing his eyes.

Now the fact was, that Algernon distinctly remembered having placed Minnie's note in a drawer of a little secretaire which he kept habitually locked, and of which the key was at that moment in his waistcoat pocket. And the discovery that his wife had in some way or other obtained access to the said secretaire gave him, for reasons known only to himself, abundant food for conjecture and reflection during the rest of the drive home.

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &C. &C.

CHAPTER XXIII. A BUSINESS INTERVIEW.

On the ensuing morning Gertrude did not appear at breakfast. She had "passed but an indifferent night," said Mrs. Raeburn, "and was recruiting herself by a little sleep for a few hours." I hated that woman's rounded phrases, which always seemed to me framed with intent to deceive, and was by no means pacified by this statement. If Gertrude was not down to lunch, I resolved to call in Mr. Wilde upon my own responsibility.

In the meantime, several incidents took place. In order, doubtless, to keep his head quite clear for the transaction of the business in hand that day, the attorney abstained altogether from his usual stimulant, the effect of which was most deplorable; for even worse than the dram-drinker, who continues to drink, is the dram-drinker who desists from doing so for a particular occasion. Then his system craves the usual fillip; his spirits lie deep down, waiting for the summons of the fire-god; his eyes lack lustre; his hands are unsteady; his tongue is chained. Throughout the forenoon Mark Raeburn exhibited all these symptoms, and, in addition, a most distressing anxiety. Unable to attend to business, notwithstanding that it had urgent claims upon him, he remained in the breakfast-room watching, with agitation, for his expected guests. Twice did he visit the office, to beg me to look in Bradshaw for the time at which Mr. Sinclair (the secretary) might be expected; and when my uncle rode up before that hour, the attorney called me in, to help him (as he expressed it) "do the honours." Nothing could have been more significant of the state to which this unhappy man had reduced himself, since, even within my remembrance, he had been remarkable for his genial manners and hearty welcome to all comers. Even the rector, who, with all his shrewdness, was by nature as unsuspicious as a child, remarked to me, with a raising of the eyebrow, when Mark happened to leave the room, that our host was "a cup too low;" a phrase which expressed, more literally than he suspected, the actual position of affairs. "Raeburn will play the deuce with the business, Harry, if he goes on like this, you know," he continued, "and leave a very poor thing for John."

It was characteristic of my uncle, under such circumstances, to think of John Raeburn's future, rather than of the present safety of his own securities; and also that he should have come over to Kirkdale upon the attorney's affairs, though he detested "business."

"Whatever Mark can want me over here for," he went on, petulantly, "is an enigma to me. I know Sinclair, to be sure; and, indeed, but for my old college-acquaintance with him, I verily believe Alec would never have got his annuity. He looked so shockingly ill, poor fellow, that they thought it was a got-up case; that he would have jumped up with a 'Ha! ha! cured in an instant!' like the man in the quack advertisement, so soon as he had got his annuity; but why, now that he has got it——"

Here the attorney re-entered the room,

and cut short my uncle's speculations; he had been upstairs, he said, to see that all was ready.

"My good fellow, one would think it was a surgical operation that was about to take place," observed the rector, good-humouredly, "instead of a simple legal formula—if, indeed, there is such a thing as simplicity in the law at all. I hope the patient is not in such a state of flutter as you seem to be?"

"Not at all, not at all, my dear Hastings; this is one of his good days."

"Very well, then I'll tell you what I'll do," said the rector, impulsively; "I'll go up and keep him company till this secretary-bird arrives."

"No, no, no, you must not do that," answered the attorney, hurriedly. "Alec is tolerably composed, it is true, but when a sick man is expecting a visit, not from a secretary-bird—no, by Jove, but from a vulture, a fellow that will positively be benefited by his decease, and is anxious for it—why that, of course, gives him some perturbation."

"Well, here is Sinclair," observed my uncle, as a fly drove up to the front-door, "so poor Alec need not remain on tenterhooks any longer."

The secretary was a grave and discreet personage, as befitted his post. Though a contemporary of the rector's, he showed so austerely beside him that, perhaps, for the first time I recognised how young for his age my uncle was. In their very greeting there was all the difference in the world; the rector so frank and free, the secretary so reticent, reserved, and on his guard, as though he feared the other should be about to reveal some humiliating antecedents—reminiscences of his college career, which, however, I doubt not, was spotless. As to the attorney, Mr. Sinclair surveyed him with gimlet eyes, as a commissioner in bankruptcy might regard a gentleman accused of concealing property from his creditors; and I must confess that Mark Raeburn looked as if he had done it; anything more obsequious, nay, more cringing, than his manner, I had never beheld. "He was deeply grieved to have had to trouble Mr. Sinclair to come to Kirkdale, but his brother's condition rendered his going to town out of the question, as Mr. Hastings, their mutual friend, would bear witness."

"The medical certificate explained that much," was Mr. Sinclair's reply.

"True, true," replied Mark, hastily, not, however, without impressing me at least with the conviction that he had forgotten all about it; "that, of course, was decisive. Now the question is, shall we go upstairs at once, and lunch afterwards, or take some refreshment in the meantime. You must surely stand in need of it, Mr. Sinclair, after your long journey?"

My belief is, that the attorney would have given a ten-pound note, for the opportunity of taking a glass of sherry at that moment. Unhappily, the secretary was that too-conveniently-constituted sort of man who is never in a hurry for his food. He would prefer to wait, he said, until the business which he had come about should be completed.

"Perhaps you are right," said Mark; "for, after all, the whole affair will not take five minutes, you know."

Mr. Sinclair bowed stiffly, looking the while as though he did not know anything of the kind.

"I am quite at your service," said he.

Then they all trooped upstairs, my uncle, then the secretary, and lastly Mark, who looked as pale as the sick man, who was awaiting them, in the bed-room, and stumbled at every other step. I heard Mrs. Raeburn come out into the passage and cry "Hush!" at the noise he made.

The interview lasted nearer fifty minutes than five, and then the three came down again to luncheon. Mark looked utterly shattered, and scarcely spoke a word; my uncle was graver than before; the secretary, on the other hand, seemed to have thawed a little. He was the only one, after all, who proved to have an appetite, though the attorney showed a great devotion to the sherry.

"I am afraid, Sinclair," said the rector, "that you will have no occasion to come down here three months hence. Our friend above stairs seems in evil case."

"Yes, indeed. Speaking in my professional capacity, however, I may say that, in the case of life annuitants, to die is the exception—to live, the rule."

It is extraordinary how persons not given to joking will, when they do joke, select the most inopportune occasions for it. It seemed, however, in this case to strike the speaker that he had been, under the circumstances, a little too facetious, for he turned to Mark and added, "Seriously speaking, my dear sir, I have known persons survive for many years who were apparently even nearer to death's door than your poor brother."

"Then, since he does not suffer, let us hope his life will be prolonged," said the rector, earnestly.

"Personally, I echo your sentiments with all my heart, Hastings," observed the guest; "but, in the interest of my employers, you know, I am bound to wish a short life to their annuitants."

I am sure, though this man had been a college acquaintance of my uncle's, that he could never have been his friend; the rector looked at him now as if he could have kicked him; while the attorney, on the other hand, seemed to be by no means displeased with his new acquaintance.

"I hope, Mr. Sinclair, we shall have the pleasure of seeing you down here next quarter-day, which will be in December," said he. "I mean—that is, that you will not send a deputy."

"You are very good, Mr. Raeburn. No, I always look to these matters myself; though, in this case, indeed, my personal attendance will, for the future, be hardly necessary; if Mr. Hastings here—'clergyman of the parish,' our articles say, but it can't signify which parish—will be good enough to 'certify,' that will be quite sufficient; and, of course, we shall have your brother's signature if he is able to make it. I have known an annuity paid for years to a man who, from physical weakness, could only put a cross instead of his name."

"There is nothing of that sort as yet in poor Alec's case," remarked my uncle. "I thought his signature to the receipt particularly vigorous, considering his condition in other respects."

"It was so," assented the secretary, "and that is a very bad sign—I mean, a very good one, in a case of this description. Indeed, I think, my dear Hastings, that you and your friend have stolen a march upon us after all, and that he will live to sign many a quarter's receipt."

For all that, it was plain that the "vulture," as Mark had termed him, was, in his professional capacity, well pleased with his interview, and confident of brother Alec's speedy demise; while my uncle was proportionally cast down. As to the attorney, the wine seemed to have made another man of him, and he so skilfully manipulated the ungenial secretary, that they parted quite good friends.

"I am sorry," said Mark, as the other stepped into his fly, "that you have delegated your duties here to Mr. Hastings, since it will deprive us of the pleasure of giving you a Christmas welcome at the Priory."

"Thank you, thank you; but, you see, it's a great relief to me if I can get these matters done by deputy. If Hastings were not personally known to me—a man so completely trustworthy—the matter could have been scarcely managed in that way, in a case in which such a considerable sum"—he whispered something in Mark's ear, and held up his hands by way of finish to the sentence.

"Oh, your company can stand it," cried Mark, laughing; "it is as rich as Dives."

"Poor, poor as Lazarus, I do assure you," replied the secretary, with a deprecating smile; and away he drove.

"A good man of business that, depend upon it," observed the attorney to my uncle, approvingly, as the vehicle rolled away.

"I shouldn't wonder," returned the rector, drily; "he's a deuced vulgar fellow, however, at all events."

The rector, who was anxious to be off, had left, as usual, his horse at the inn in Kirkdale, having always various errands to transact in the little town upon his wife's account. I was about to set out with him thither, in order to have the opportunity of calling on Mr. Wilde, when it suddenly struck me that such a course might be open to objection. I was fully resolved that Gertrude should see the doctor, but it was better, I reflected, that he should be sent for, if possible, by somebody else; it would be taking too much upon myself that I should do this thing at my own suggestion, and without even the permission of her own family.

"You know poor Gertrude is ill again?" said I to my uncle, as he was about to take leave of his host.

"Not ill, I hope, Harry," returned he. "Mrs. Raeburn told me that she felt a slight indisposition, but would be downstairs to dinner."

"Gertrude herself, however, informed me last night," answered I, gravely, "that she had experienced a return of the same malady of which Mr. Wilde thought so seriously when she went to Stanbrook."

"I say, Raeburn, do you hear that?" inquired my uncle, sharply.

"Yes, yes; I am very sorry," replied the attorney, starting from a "brown study," in which he had been enveloped since the secretary's departure. "I can't think what has come to Gertrude; she never used to be so delicate."

"Yes; but the point is, what is to be done?" returned my uncle, impatiently. "Mrs. Raeburn is naturally engrossed in her attendance on your brother, and has neither time nor thought to give to others; and as we are going into the town, don't you think it would be just as well if Harry should look in upon Mr. Wilde and ask him to step up?"

"Well, really, you know that would be rather embarrassing," answered the attorney, with unwonted decision. "In point of fact, very much so, because Mr. Wilde has protested he is of no use to Alec, and will only visit him as a friend."

"But who wants him to see Alec? Here is Gertrude ill, or getting ill, and no one to look after her. I am sure Mrs. Raeburn would thank him for taking this second responsibility off her shoulders."

"There is something in that," said the attorney, reflecting, perhaps, how often his wife had adverted to responsibility No. One for the last six months. "By all means send Wilde in; only make him understand, please, that it will be a professional call, and to Gertrude only. As lawyers, we are bound to protest against gratuitous advice of all kinds, are we not, Sheddon? Good-bye, rector, and thank you for coming to see us through our little business affair. In future, you know, I shall regard you with increased respect, as the plenipotentiary of the Assurance Company. Good-bye!"

MACBETH ON THE STAGE.

LATE in the last century certain satirical verses were current touching the various representatives of the character of Macbeth, who had from time to time occupied the scene, beginning with Quin and ending with John Kemble. The author does not hesitate to assail players of accepted worth and distinction, and no doubt occasionally sacrifices truth to epigram; his list, however, may claim to be very complete, and, as an example of condensed criticism of an acrid kind, is certainly curious, and even instructive:

Old Quin, ere fate suppressed his lab'ring breath,
In studied accents grumbled out "Macbeth."
Next Garrick came, whose utterance truth impressed,
While every look the tyrant's guilt confessed;
Then the cold Sheridan half froze the part,
Yet what he lost by nature saved by art.
Tall Barry next advanced toward Birnam Wood,
Nor ill performed what scarce he understood.
Grave Mossop then erect pursued his march,
His words were minute guns, his actions starch.
Rough Holland, too, rolled round his savage eye,
Half stamped with excellence from Davy's die.
Then heavy Ross essayed the tragic frown,
But beef and pudding kept all meaning down.
Next flippant Smith assumed the murderer's task,
While o'er his tongue light tripped the horrid task;
By trick, not acumen, he toiled to please,
And all the man was bustle, noise, and ease.
Hard Macklin late guilt's feelings strove to speak
While sweats infernal drenched his iron cheek.
Then error's pin-basket, John Kemble, came,
Who builds his arrogance on public shame.
Like Fielding's kings, his fancied triumph's past,
All he can boast is that—he failed the last!

There were Macbeths before Quin, however, as there have been Macbeths since John Kemble. The tragedy is supposed to have been first brought upon the stage in the year 1606, when the chief character was undertaken by Richard Burbadge, the leading tragedian of the company then performing in the Globe Theatre, who had already won fame as the original representative of such parts as Lear, Hamlet, Brutus, Romeo, Shylock, Richard, &c. Burbadge had scarcely a rival upon the stage; he was the greatest actor of his epoch, and upon him was bestowed by general acclamation that title of "England's Roscius," which, at a later date, devolved upon Garrick. There is some evidence to show that Burbadge was of short stature and of portly form. It has been surmised that Hamlet was described by Shakespeare as "fat, and scant of breath," to suit the physical peculiarities of Burbadge. A funeral elegy on the death of the famous actor, in 1618, enumerates various of his performances, and supplies a hint that his death was the result of a paralytic seizure that first affected his speech. With him died, it is averred, the characters he impersonated:

He's gone, and with him what a world are dead,
Friends, every one, and what a blank instead;
Take him for all in all, he was a man
Not to be matched, and no age ever can.
No more young Hamlet, though but scant of breath,
Shall cry "Revenge!" for his dear father's death.

* * * * *

Tyrant Macbeth, with unwashed, bloody hand,
We vainly now may hope to understand.

Other Shakespearean characters are mentioned, and the poet proceeds:

England's great Roscius! For what Roscius
Was unto Rome, that Burbadge was to us.
How did his speech become him, and his pace
Suit with his speech, and every action grace
Them both alike; while not a word did fall
Without just weight to ballast it withal.
Hadst thou but spoke to Death, and used the power
Of thy enchanting tongue at that first hour
Of his assault, he had let fall his dart,
And quite been charmed with thy all-charming art;
This Death well knew, and to prevent this wrong,
He first made seizure on thy wondrous tongue;
Then on the rest: 'twas easy; by degrees
The slender ivy twines the hugest trees, &c. &c.

For record of the performances of Macbeth, after the re-opening of the theatres at the Restoration, we have to turn to the Diary of Mr. Pepys, with whom Macbeth seems to have been a favourite work, although in the first instance (5th November, 1664) he merely describes it as "a pretty good play, admirably acted." Two years later he finds it "most excellently acted, and an excellent play for variety." In January, 1667, he makes the following curious mention of it:—"To the Duke's house and saw Macbeth, which, though I saw it lately, yet appears a most excellent play in all respects, but, especially in divertisement, though it be deep tragedy, which is a strange perfection in a tragedy, it being most proper here and suitable." On the following 19th April he writes:—"To the playhouse, where saw Macbeth, which, though I have seen it often, yet it is one of the best plays for a stage, and a variety of dancing and music that ever I saw." A performance on the ensuing 16th October appears to have gravely dissatisfied both Mr. and Mrs. Pepys:—"To the Duke's house, and I was vexed to see Young, who is a bad actor at best, act Macbeth in the room of Betterton, who, poor man! is sick; but, Lord! what a prejudice is wrought in me against the whole play, and everybody else agreed in disliking this fellow. Thence home, and there find my wife come home; because of this fellow's acting of the part she went out of the house again." On the 12th August, 1668, we find Mr. Pepys enjoying partridges for dinner, and pronouncing them "very good meat;" it was not necessary then to wait until the 1st September; and afterwards with his wife, and Mercer, and Deb, proceeding to "the Duke of York's house and witnessing a representation of Macbeth to their great content." On the 21st December, 1668, Mr. Pepys makes his last mention of Macbeth, but he is now less occupied with the play than with the audience, for the king and court are present, and Mr. Pepys and his wife sit just "under them, and my Lady Castlemaine, and close to a woman that comes into the pit, a kind of loose gossip, that pretends to be like her, and is so, something." Mr. Pepys, however, thinks that Mrs. Pepys is "as pretty as any of them;" and his friends, Talbot and W. Hewer, are of a like opinion. "The King and the Duke of York minded me and smiled upon me, at the handsome woman near me." Was this pretty Mrs. Pepys, or the "loose gossip" who resembled my Lady Castlemaine? "But it vexed me," Mr. Pepys concludes, "to see Moll Davis, in the box over the king's and my Lady Castlemaine's, look down upon the king and he up to her; and so did my Lady Castlemaine once, to see who it was, but when she saw Moll Davis she looked like fire, which troubled me." The diarist was apt to be vexed and troubled by matters that did not really much concern him. Altogether, although this may have been a diverting afternoon for the playgoers, both princely and plebeian, Shakespeare, apparently, had but a small share in entertaining them. Mr. Pepys has not a word to say about the performance of Macbeth.

There can be little doubt that at this time the play was represented in accordance with the poet's text, if with certain interpolations of song and dance, which found favour in Mr. Pepys's eyes as so much "divertisement" and "variety." Even these additions to the work, however, may have been presented upon the Elizabethan stage, and with the sanction of the poet. But the work was now to be tampered with after a fashion he could not have approved. Davenant's version of Macbeth was first produced at the Dorset Garden Theatre in 1672. This was a new establishment, to which the Duke's company had been transferred from the theatre in Lincoln's-inn-fields, and was open under the management of Lady Davenant (Sir William's widow), Betterton, and Joseph Harris, an actor famed for his versatility, who is said to have succeeded alike as Romeo, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and Cardinal Wolsey. To win playgoers from the rival Theatre Royal, the Duke's company introduced "a new species of plays called operas," which were not simply plays embellished with music, but rather dramas expressly contrived to exhibit scenic splendour, mechanical devices, songs, dances, and posturing. Macbeth was brought upon the boards as an opera of this class. "Dances of furies" were invented for the incantation scene in the fourth act, and choruses were added from Middleton's play of The Witch. This work was not in truth printed until 1778, but a manuscript copy had been in Davenant's possession sometime before his death. The music had been supplied by Matthew Lock, who, originally a chorister in the cathedral church of Exeter, and afterwards a pupil of Edward Gibbons, had now risen to a distinguished position; he had been commissioned to compose the music performed on the triumphal entry of King Charles, rising afterwards to be Composer in Ordinary to the King and Master of the Royal Chapel.

But Davenant's alterations were not confined simply to musical and scenic adornments, and to additions from The Witch of Middleton. He subjected the play to violent changes, profanely tampering with the poet's text, with a view to the conversion of the blank verse into the rhymed lines, which were then much admired by the king and his court. Betterton, skilled in the performance of Shakespeare's Macbeth, had now to learn Davenant's; Harris appeared as Macduff, Smith as Banquo; Banquo's ghost, strange to say, being represented by Sandford, an uncomely and deformed actor, famous for his personation of villainous characters, while Smith was possessed of "a fine figure." Mrs. Betterton appeared as Lady Macbeth, and a Mrs. Long as Lady Macduff. For unexplained reasons, Davenant has expended much labour in "writing up," as it is called, the characters of Macduff and Lady Macduff. On the first entry of Lady Macbeth, "reading a letter," Lady Macduff accompanies her; an insipid colloquy ensues between the two ladies, until Lady Macbeth, impatient to study her husband's despatch, prevails upon her guest to withdraw. Malcolm and Macduff meet at Birnam Wood, instead of in England. As Macbeth is haunted by the ghost of Banquo, so Lady Macbeth is haunted by a new apparition—the ghost of Duncan, and endeavours to persuade her husband to resign the crown in a scene where, as Tom Davies describes it, "poverty of sentiment is only exceeded by wretchedness of rhyme." But just as Lady Macbeth cannot see the ghost of Banquo, so to Macbeth the ghost of Duncan is always invisible. Here is a specimen of a new soliloquy which Macbeth is required to deliver:

She does from Duncan's death to sickness grieve,
And shall from Malcolm's death her health receive;
When by a viper bitten, nothing's good
To cure the venom but a viper's blood.

Rosse's description of the murder of Lady Macduff and her children is given to Lenox. The sleep-walking scene, and Macbeth's converse with the doctor, are shamefully mutilated. The lines beginning "My way of life" are omitted. Lenox, in lieu of young Siward, fights with Macbeth, and is killed. As he falls, he politely begs pardon of his country for dying; and Macbeth has a line assigned to him, by way of dying speech. Davenant is responsible for great part of the last act. As Steevens said of this adaptation, "almost every original beauty is either awkwardly disguised, or arbitrarily omitted." Geneste, holding this censure to be rather too unreserved, yet admits the alteration to be a very bad one, so many fine speeches being omitted, and so much insipid stuff introduced; Davenant's grand fault being that "there are scarcely six lines together in which he has not made some unnecessary and wanton change."

For some seventy years, however, this dreadful version of Davenant's kept possession of the stage; and not only were playgoers and players content with this arrangement, but disregard of Shakespeare prevailed throughout society. Sir Richard Steele, in the Tatler (No. 167), was content to quote the following lines from Davenant's Macbeth, with the notion, apparently, that he was citing Shakespeare:

To-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in a stealing pace from day to day
To the last moment of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
To their eternal night! Out, out, short candle, &c.

There is change in every line but the fourth.

After Garrick's performance of Macbeth, in 1744, Quin asked him where he found such out-of-the-way expressions as

The devil damn the black, thou cream-faced loon;
Where got'st thou that goose look?

Garrick replied in Macbeth as written by Shakespeare.

"What!" cried Mr. Quin; "pray don't I play Macbeth as written by Shakespeare?" Quin might plead in excuse for his ignorance that actors rarely study whole plays, but are content if they can learn their own parts. Mrs. Pritchard, a famous Lady Macbeth, is said by Davies never to have read "more of the play of Macbeth than her own part, as written out and delivered to her by the prompter."

Betterton acted the part of Macbeth "to the verge of his life." John Mills, a commonplace actor, with a fine voice and an imposing presence, subsequently became possessed of the character. It should with greater justice have been assigned to Barton Booth, who was Betterton's legitimate successor; but Wilks, his co-partner in the management, assumed the right to distribute the parts, and thus Booth and Powell, who were each better qualified than Mills to appear as Macbeth, had to be content with the inferior characters of Banquo and Lenox, Wilks appearing as Macduff, and winning for his exertions the special applause of the Tatler, No. 68. Quin first appeared as Macbeth in 1719, and played the part successfully for some twenty years. A contemporary critic, however, describes his performance as "cumbersome," his "sole merit in tragedy consisting in his declamation and brutal pride;" his face was deficient in variety of expression, his figure "void of the essential spirit," and his voice heavy and monotonous.

With the actors of this period Macbeth was not a favourite character. They complained that "all the pith of it" was exhausted in the earlier acts. But the actors before Garrick were, for the most part, rather elocutionists than actors: they delighted in pompous declamation, in the musical intonation of endless speeches, enlivened by little variety of gesture or change of attitude. No doubt the closing scenes of Macbeth, when rendered after this fashion, were found to be somewhat ineffective. Informed of this opinion of his predecessors, Garrick smiled significantly. He should be very unhappy, he said, if he should fail to keep alive the attention of the spectators to the last syllable of so animated a character. Yet he affected to feel some nervousness as to the result. He was always sensitive on the score of criticism—and he was skilled in preparing the public mind, and paving the way to success, by means of puffs preliminary. He had a way of meeting ridicule half way, and so of discomfiting it—of anticipating the satirist by satirising himself. So he published a humorous pamphlet, professedly anonymous—"An Essay on Acting; in which will be considered the Mimical Behaviour of a certain Faulty, Fashionable Actor, &c. To which will be added a short criticism on his acting Macbeth." And by way of motto, "Macbeth has murdered Garrick" adorned the title-page. Some critical carte and tierce followed; but there was an end to all this silly trifling when the great actor, resolute to play his best, presented himself upon the boards. His success was supreme; Macbeth was pronounced to be one of his finest impersonations; the part remained for many years an especial favourite with him. Now and then, to give a taste of his quality, he would recite his "dagger scene" in drawing-rooms. Thus he enchanted the Duke of Parma, in Italy, and Mademoiselle Clairon, the great French actress, in Paris. Both were unacquainted with the language he spoke, yet they were alike carried away by the eloquence of his looks and gestures. In her excitement, indeed, the lady caught him in her arms and kissed him. Mrs. Garrick, who was present, was wont to relate the story, and to add, "All were surprised, but David and I were delighted."

Garrick dismissed Davenant's Macbeth from the stage for ever; but the version he substituted was not absolutely pure. As a rule, he adhered to the original text, omitting certain scenes and various passages in order to reduce the length of the performance; but then he owned to a few additions "necessary to the better explanation of the writer's intentions!" And he composed a lengthy speech for dying Macbeth, "suitable, perhaps, to the character," says Davies, "but unlike Shakespeare's manner, who was not prodigal of bestowing abundance of matter on characters in that situation. But Garrick excelled in the expression of convulsive throes and dying agonies, and would not lose any opportunity that offered to show his skill in that part of his profession." The dying speech, indeed, met with general applause. It was thought to be very suitable and striking that Macbeth should mention with dying breath "his guilt, delusion, the witches, and those horrid visions of future punishment which must for ever appal and torture the last moments of such accumulated crimes."

Moreover, it would appear that Garrick retained the illustrations of song and dance, with the extracts from Middleton's Witch, so long associated with the Macbeth of the stage. Certainly, as a manager, Garrick would perceive the worth of garniture of this kind; that he would dispense with it altogether seems highly improbable. And if he really represented Macbeth without these embellishments, when did they find their way back to the theatre? Whereupon the question arises—the Macbeth music so invariably ascribed to Matthew Lock; did he, in truth, compose it? We can hardly consult a better authority than Dr. Rimbault, the learned editor of North's Memories of Music. "The music of Macbeth, now popularly known as Lock's, is the composition of Richard Leveridge, and was performed for the first time on the

25th January, 1704. Lock's music, composed in the reign of Charles the Second, is entirely different." Leveridge is known to have composed the words and tune of The Roast Beef of Old England; the music to Gay's ballad of Black-Eyed Susan; and the song of To You who Live at Home at Ease. He was a bass singer at the theatre in Lincoln's-inn-fields, and, when more than sixty years of age, still esteemed his own vocal powers so highly that he offered, for a wager of one hundred guineas, to sing a bass song with any man in England. It is to be noted that, in Geneste's History of the Stage, no mention is made of any performance of Macbeth either with or without music at the date—25th January, 1704—mentioned by Dr. Rimbault.

Garrick, of course, played Macbeth, as he played almost every other leading character, in the full court dress of the time of George the Second. It was a measure of reform, if no great step towards accuracy, to attire Macbeth as a Highland chieftain of the Rob Roy or snuff-shop pattern. This Macklin did in 1773, when, at the age of seventy, he essayed the character, and incurred some derision from his audience, for he looked, it is said, "more like a Scotch piper than a general and prince of the blood, stumping down the stage at the head of an army." Macklin's example, however, was adopted by all subsequent Macbeths, and tartan became the only wear until some thirty years since, when the antiquaries intervened with the information that, in the remote times of Macbeth, tartan had hardly been invented.

It was in 1784, at Drury-lane Theatre, that Mrs. Siddons, on the occasion of her benefit, first played Lady Macbeth before a London audience. Since the time of Mrs. Pritchard, who had left the stage some sixteen years, there had been no such impersonation of the character. Mrs. Siddons's performance was pronounced to be perfect from first to last. Her sleep-walking scene obtained especial admiration. It was hinted that the artistic arrangement of her draperies was the kindly work of her friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was seen "all gaze—all wonder," occupying a seat in the orchestra. She seemed completely possessed by the character she represented. Her physical advantages were of a commanding kind; her presence most majestic; her voice at once musical and powerful. She was a very queen of tragedy. When Sheridan was bantered about his making love to Mrs. Siddons, he replied that he should as soon have thought of making love to the Archbishop of Canterbury!

Mrs. Siddons first played Lady Macbeth to the Macbeth of "Gentleman Smith," an actor whose robust liveliness well qualified him for success as the original Charles Surface, but who was scarcely competent to appear in poetic tragedy. John Kemble, however, was presently to undertake the part, and furnish worthy support to his illustrious sister. Kemble's voice was of limited compass, and was apt to lose tone after any sustained effort. In the address to the witches at the pit of Acheron, he was found deficient in Garrick's harmonious elocution and impressiveness. Probably conscious of failure, he reduced the invocation to two lines—much, it was said, to the comfort of the gallery, all anxious to arrive at the spectral results of the witches' conjurations. In the "dagger" soliloquy, Bowden thought him "too explosive, too much in action; but he had a larger stage to fill than Garrick had, and it was difficult to conceive a finer eye than Kemble's. For the stage direction in the second act, "a bell rings," Kemble substituted the clock striking two; his excuse being probably the "One, two; why then 'tis time to do it," of Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene. The ringing of the bell, however, had reference to the preparation of Macbeth's drink. A change which much displeased the playgoers of the time was the omission of Banquo's ghost, notwithstanding the explicit stage direction: "the ghost of Banquo rises, and sits in Macbeth's place." This was, perhaps, a concession to Lloyd's poem of the Actor, in which it was demanded—

> Why need the ghost usurp the monarch's place
> To frighten children with his mealy face?
> The king alone should form the phantom there,
> And talk and tremble at the empty chair.

In compliance with popular demand, however, the ghost of Banquo was speedily restored to the stage. To make some amends for the absence of this apparition, Kemble introduced a band of parti-coloured hobgoblins, the "black spirits and white, red spirits and grey," of the text. Among the boys personating these strange beings, was, curiously enough, the child Edmund Kean, who mischievously tripped up his brother sprites, so that they fell like a pack of cards; thereupon Kemble grew very wrath, even, it is said, to thumping the juvenile performer, and, for a term, dismissing him the theatre. By-and-by Kean was destined to dispute the supremacy of

Kemble, and to wrest from him certain of his leading characters, but scarcely Macbeth it would seem. Kean's Macbeth was, according to Hazlitt, deficient in poetry. He did not look like the man who had encountered the weird sisters. His fifth act lacked vitality; the pauses were too long; the text was not respected. Mr. Kean's dress was "too much docked and curtailed for the gravity of the character;" he was too agile and mercurial; he fought more like a modern fencing-master than a Scottish chieftain of the eleventh century. "In the delivery of the beautiful soliloquy, 'My way of life,' Mr. Kean was unsuccessful. The fine thoughtful melancholy did not seem to come over his mind which characterises Mr. Kemble's recitation of these lines," and so on.

Macbeth was a favourite character with Macready throughout his career. It was as Macbeth he took leave of the stage in 1851. Some eight years before he had produced the tragedy at Drury-lane, during his brief management of that establishment, with great splendour and completeness, if without that care for archaic correctness which distinguished later revivals of the work. It was in the year 1847, during Mr. Phelps's exemplary management of Sadler's Wells Theatre, that the tragedy was first handed over to the antiquaries, as it were, and produced with especial regard to accuracy of costume and scenery. For the first time Macbeth trod the stage, arrayed as a barbaric warrior of the eleventh century, in rude armour, with the conical helmet, mantle, tunic, cross-gartering, and ringed byrne such as the Norsemen and Anglo-Saxons of the period are known to have worn; for, touching the precise dress of the early Scots, no authority could be discovered. Mr. Charles Kean's production of the tragedy at the Princess's Theatre in 1853 followed the manner of the Sadler's Wells revival, but with increase of archæological zeal, and with a statement of the manager's authorities for his scenic innovations. There was learned reference to Diodorus Siculus, Strabo and Pliny, to Saxon illuminations and early English chronicles. Macbeth was clad after an effigy of Alexander the First (who commenced his reign in 1107, only fifty years after the death of Macbeth), in a hauberk of iron rings or bosses sewn upon leather, and worn over a tunic of red and blue cloth. Of tartan, no scrap was discernible at either theatre, but record was found of Queen Boadicea wearing her dress chequer-wise of many colours, comprising purple, light and dark red, violet, and blue, and this was deemed sufficient authority for attiring the company in parti-coloured clothes. But while the representation was thus archaic, great attention was paid to theatrical effect. The costumes were very beautiful; the arms and equipments were of costly workmanship; the scenes were admirable examples of theatrical painting; and most ingenious mechanical devices were employed in regard to the apparition of Banquo, the hovering through the air of the witches, the sinking of the cauldron, and the fierce conflict closing the tragedy. It is to be noted, however, that at Sadler's Wells more severe respect was shown for the poet's text than prevailed at the Princess's. Mr. Phelps resolutely dispensed with all musical embellishments, and disdained the aid of Middleton, of Lock, and of Leveridge. Hecate appeared as a speaker, not as a bass singer; Lady Macduff and her child were restored to the stage, and duly slain in the presence of the audience; the drunken porter was allowed to occupy the scene, with the old man who reports that Duncan's horses "did eat each other;" and Macduff even entered at the end, strictly obedient to the stage direction of the original, bearing "Macbeth's head upon a pole," a proceeding that was found very trying to the gravity of the spectators.

It was long usual to assign the parts of the witches to the low comedians of the theatre. Davenant so employed the comic actors, and perhaps did but follow the practice of the Elizabethan stage, for Davenant had seen plays at the Globe and Blackfriars, long before the Civil War closed all the theatres. Indeed, the utmost license, in the direction of grimace and buffoonery, was long permitted to the representatives of the witches. They were required to dance not less than to sing. "I have seen," writes Davies, "our best dancers employed in the exhibition of infernal spirits." They wore the dress of the conventional witch—the black conical hats, mufflers, scarlet kirtles, and high-heeled large buckled shoes of Mother Goose and Mother Bunch—as those dames are depicted in the children's books. Moreover, they carried birch-brooms of the crossing-sweeper pattern, which they leaped over and brandished, in the course of the comic dances they executed. Kemble had the courage to suppress these absurd exhibitions, greatly to the wrath of the gallery. At Bristol, in 1803, there was almost a riot in the theatre, the audience refusing to allow the performance to proceed until the dance of witches had been duly accomplished. Even in the more refined city of Bath, Kemble was denied a hearing until the witches had jumped over their brooms in the old-fashioned way. In 1828, however, Macready being the Macbeth, the manager ventured to omit the dance. He had been careful, however, to see that the absurd performance had been sufficiently rehearsed, in case the demand for it should be too imperious for resistance.

In 1770, when French classical tragedies were much the vogue, and antique draperies the subject of general admiration, an attempt was made at Covent Garden to attire the witches in "the Sibyllic taste," or as sculpture might portray the Parcæ; but this denationalisation of the weird sisters did not please. Had not Macbeth himself styled them "filthy hags?" Why should they not correspond with this description? Yet toleration was found for the singers, who were wont to dress the witches in a very fantastic manner. In Kemble's time, the lovely Mrs. Crouch appeared as a sort of sublimated Mother Bunch — a singing witch in a fancy hat and feather, black velvet skirt, looped over a quilted black satin petticoat, silk hose, powdered hair, and rouged cheeks, with point-lace collar, cuffs, and apron. Such a weird sister has not since been seen, either upon blasted heath or the boards of a theatre.

Macbeth has formed the subject of an opera by Chelard, a French composer, who is now completely forgotten, although his work found its way to the Haymarket some fifty years ago; and there is a "Macbetto" by Signor Verdi, which, strange to say, although presented in the provinces and in Dublin, has not yet been heard by Londoners. Madame Ristori has played here in an Italian version of Macbeth, by Signor Giulio Carcano, and upon one occasion ventured to present Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene in English. And room must be found for a note concerning the French Macbeth of M. Ducis, first played in Paris in 1784 with but partial success. "No consideration," writes the Baron de Grimm, "less than that attached to his personal qualities and the success of his last works, Œdipus and King Lear, could possibly have protected this piece from failing at its first performance. The two first acts were favourably received; the third, in which the remorse of Macbeth begins, was in general received with a severe silence, interrupted only occasionally by the applause bestowed on the energy with which M. Ducis has treated a situation so terrible." M. Ducis had made various alterations in the tragedy, with a view to investing it with the repose that marks the classic stage. He has often substituted narrative for action and introduced many changes, simply, it would seem, out of the love of altering peculiar to all adapters. We may quote the Baron de Grimm's account of the production, supplied to his friend and correspondent, the Duke of Saxe-Gotha. "M. Ducis supposes Malcolm, the son of Duncan, to be brought up by Seyward, a Scotch Highlander, to whose care the king consigns him, to save him from assassination, and in this manner fixes all the motives of his piece upon this inheritor of the throne, who passes for the son of Seyward himself. But this fiction, which ought to relieve and vary the interest of an action continually dreadful, has only furnished M. Ducis with the fine accessory part of Seyward. Malcolm, who in the first act is announced and introduced in an interesting manner, appears in the third only to inform us that he is the son of Duncan, that his father was assassinated by Macbeth; and in the fifth to serve as the pantomime to the dénouement. It is to be regretted that M. Ducis has taken so little advantage of this character, which might have been made the soul of the action. In other respects he has supplied the interest which nothing can perfectly replace by the profound, pathetic, and often sublime and agonising energy with which he has treated the whole character of Macbeth. The exposition began by Frédégonde"—a name bestowed upon Lady Macbeth—"completed by Seyward; the recital of the combat of Macbeth; his arrival; the development of his ambition, this same ambition which is at war with his remorse; his remorse destroyed by the counsels of Frédégonde; and the truly dramatic action in which he flies to the succour of Duncan at the same instant that he enters his chamber to stab him, have received from the public just applause. But from the third act the action offers nothing but the remorse of Macbeth; and this remorse, though often eloquent, oppresses and fatigues; because this sentiment, although M. Ducis has presented it under every shade and colour, is, in its own nature, always declamatory and nearly allied to exaggeration; because an assassin pursued during three acts by the horror of his crime, and by despair almost urged to delirium, is a character which dejects the soul instead of interesting it."

FURNITURE.

What hieroglyphs and arrow-headed inscriptions have revealed to us concerning the domestic interiors of the world's earliest empires tends to prove that Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, with all their gorgeous magnificence of architecture, thought little of the furnishing of the palaces which were decked with so lavish an expenditure of cost and care. It was from more modern sources—from the stately Medes, lovers of pomp, ease, and ceremony—that the Romans derived those ivory couches and carved chairs of scented Eastern wood, which stern Quirites of the elder school regarded with contempt and dislike.

But still, even when Valens or Julian wore the purple, furniture, in the sense in which we now understand it, as something necessary and indispensable, without which a house is but a bare and empty shell, was unknown. In Virgil's day the notion of such a dinner-table as he attributes to Æneas—the rough boards propped on improvised trestles, or on the knees of the guests, the great flaps of unleavened bread that served as platters, so that to eat the plate as well as the meat was a natural and matter-of-course proceeding—was not one which called for any special explanation. Beds, older than Homer and Hesiod, were, indeed, the most primitive, as well as the most important, articles of furniture.

If the classic races, with all the wealth of the accessible world at their command, inhabited houses, which to our judgment were but sparely furnished, allowance must be made for the influence of a climate which, like that of Greece and Italy, encourages the spending of many hours in the open air. On the banks of the Volturno, or even of Po or Arno, a citizen lived much less within doors than is readily conceivable to our ideas. The baths, with their shady porticos and huge halls, made the Roman of the middle-class indifferent to his own narrow atrium, and the dog-hole in which he slept. It was pleasanter to pass an evening amidst the plash of fountains and the rustle of the lime-trees, than to be shut up in a home with little light and less air.

Our northern forefathers had, at least, one excellent reason for the scantiness and rudeness of their household gear, in respect of the constant changes of residence which their life exacted. All the Germanic and Scandinavian clans of which we have any knowledge, appear frequently to have changed their quarters, as was necessary, when grass for the cattle was the first essential of national life. Migratory families had little chance of carrying unbroken goods and chattels from the Baltic to the Danube.

When a more settled state of things began to prevail, the permanent dwellings, large and small, were but sparsely provided with tables, chairs, and beds. Fuller's description of the logs which served as pillows for the hardy yeomen of bygone generations may, or may not, have been strictly accurate. At any rate, the bolster—the "bowster blae"—frequently mentioned in Scottish and in Danish ballads of a very early date, was stuffed with wool or with goose-feathers, not with wood.

The great insecurity of life during the feudal time, the bad roads, the frequent warfare, and the lack of skilled artisans, contributed to render furniture very scarce and very dear. The village wright, he who made a cart-wheel or affixed the palings of a pigstye, could construct the rude three-legged stool that gave accommodation to the farmhouse visitor, or the settle on which the dwellers in the baronial mansion took their seats before the fire. But the carved chair of the knight or the lady; the canopy of dais that overshadowed the heads of master and mistress in hall; the oaken press where was kept the hoarded finery; the reredos; the latticed screen for the tiny household chapel—these were the work of some roving joiner; one of those free lances of trade who wandered the country, living at free quarters, and picking up a handful of French crowns in one place, a few doits or stivers in another.

Even a king had very little in his own chamber besides his bed, and the chest that contained his robes and hunting attire, his royal hose and velvet cap, his mail shirt and Florence shoes of milk-white leather. The bed was always draped with something rich or gaudy, cloth of gold or silver, or some silken fabric bought at huge price from Venetian merchants. On state occasions the king's mantle, trimmed with choice furs and broad laces, was flung upon this bed; and cabinet councils were held under the presidence of the king's grace in the king's own lodging.

The great hall of a castle or fortified mansion, so late as the commencement of the sixteenth century, was thought sufficiently furnished if it held a dozen of stools, a couple of stiff-backed chairs, a few benches, and a permanent side-table known as the "black-stock," on which stood loaves and leather jacks of thin ale, with single-milk cheese, and, in some cases, cold bacon or mutton hams, so that hungry retainers, coming in from a long ride, might break their fast without giving trouble to cook or scullion. The long dinner-table itself, a mere range of boards supported by props, was broken up after every meal; while the floor, strewed with straw in winter and with rushes in summer, could be promptly swept clear in reply to the cry of "A hall!" for dancing purposes.

The Elizabethan epoch could boast of much more furniture than had sufficed for an earlier period; but the tall, straight-backed chairs, the rigid seats, the massive tables, and the heavy black presses and escritoires, all possessed a severe angularity which few would welcome as a revival of a bygone mode. It should be remembered that our insular standard of comfort was, three centuries or more ago, very far in arrear of that which prevailed in Holland, France, or Northern Italy. Erasmus saw much to praise while on this side of the Channel, but he was unsparing in his criticism of the slovenly untidiness of the English homes on which he set his learned eyes. Only a hundred years ago, Cowper thought it worth while to devote an eloquent poem to the introduction of that strange oriental luxury the sofa, although the "day-bed," or straight couch, was perfectly well known in the times of Jonson and of Shakespeare. In a yeoman's dwelling, fixed seats frequently formed a semicircle around the cavernous fireplace, while stools, or casks set on end, accommodated the junior members of the family.

We have been so accustomed to take our ideas of French furniture, at its best, from the buhl and ormolu of the First Empire, or from the rococo prettiness of the Louis the Fifteenth epoch, that few but professed scholars of history are aware to what a pitch the ostentatious opulence of the French nobility had soared, during the stormy period that intervened between the marriage of Francis the First, and the accession of Louis the Fifteenth. Yet proof enough exists that complete sets of furniture, in solid silver, were by no means uncommon among the provincial seigneurs of France, and that the existence of these masses of bullion not unfrequently exercised a considerable effect upon the smouldering warfare of the League. A devoted adherent of the king could, by melting down his tables and chairs, at any time equip a squadron, while the prospect of a spoil so rich attracted mercenary troops from every land.

Tapestry, so highly prized by our forefathers, must always have been peculiarly an adjunct of high station; while the stamped and gilded leather which, in some instances, replaced it, was not invented in Spain until towards the date of the discovery of America. But silken hangings, or others of fine cloth, and of considerable value, were frequently heirlooms in families of no very lofty genealogical pretensions; although it was only on holiday occasions that the walls of rooms were thus gaily decked. The introduction of carpets, originally from Broussa, in Turkey, belongs to a very recent date; while Kidderminster's once famous looms were set up in rivalry with those of Tournay and Brussels, where were produced the earliest imitation of Turkish and Persian floor-coverings.

Modern upholstery, besides adopting curves and rounded edges, and elastic cushions undreamed of in the earlier Georgian reigns, has very much enlarged the stock of its materials. Oak was almost the only wood available to the carver or the cabinet-maker of the Plantagenet days. Then came walnut, and, for those who could afford to pay for such an exotic, the hard ebony from African forests; and later still, mahogany and rosewood from tropical America. The gloss and sheen of satin-wood, maple, and partridge-wood were, sixty years since, unknown to the purveyors of furniture or the decorators of houses; but, on the other hand, modern workmen do not often exhibit those marvels of antique art presented by the old cabinets, curiously inlaid with ivory, mother-of-pearl, gold, and silver, which form the cynosure of the collector.

The high price of really good furniture, enduring enough to stand wear and tear, causes many a twinge of anxiety to youthful housekeepers setting up for the first time their Lares and Penates in a home where all has the attraction of novelty. And it is precisely to tempt this inexperienced class of customers that household gear, at prices temptingly low, are sedulously advertised. As a rule, the more costly and substantial article will, in the long run, approve itself the cheapest. Even sofas, and tables, and arm-chairs after awhile come to be regarded as a species of dumb friends, endeared to us by habit and by faithful service; and, in this respect, even the cumbrous and tasteless furniture of our ancestors had a marked superiority over the more showy but ephemeral productions of the present day.

LIFE.

Down from the moor, all flushed with purple dyes,
  Dances the bright beck 'neath the morning ray;
Now tossing lily-leaves to laughing skies,
  Now bathing mimic rocks in fairy spray;
Broadening its banks, and deepening its tune,
Till the great stream reflects the blaze of noon.

Stronger and graver, onward rolls the river,
  Heather and woodland far behind it cast;
Where city lights upon its waters quiver,
  As the fierce current bears its burthens past;
Till, full and grand, rejoicing in its strength,
It sweeps to oceans' mighty breast at length.

So, to the golden hours of happy youth,
  To fret, and toil, and heat of middle life;
The evening time, through patience, prayer, and truth,
  Brings soft serenity to lull the strife;
Calm flows the river, as it nears the sea,
Hushed grows the life that nears Eternity.

THE RED HOUSE.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IV.

I rose early, and was absent the greater part of the next day, engaged in surveying for our new line.

It was nearly night when I returned to the Red House. Mark Voss, smoking a short pipe, was sitting on the door-step. The door behind him was open. A lighted lanthorn was placed beside him.

"It's you, is it?" he said, as he moved a little to let me pass. "It grows uncommon dark, don't it? I thought it might be the master coming along; and yet it didn't sound like his footstep, neither."

"He's not in, then?"

"Not yet. He's pretty sure to be late to-night. He's got work to do—these assizes have brought work into the town, after a way. It's a joke to think of his working, though, isn't it? I used to work once. Now it's his turn; and serve him jolly well right. But to be called 'the master,' and to be obliged to work for the two of us—for such a fellow as me, as well as for himself—it sounds queer, doesn't it? But he must earn money somehow, you see, or we shouldn't get along anyhows. He had a power of money once, to be sure; but it's all gone now. Still, he's a scholard, is the master. It would be easy enough for him to earn money, if he chose. But he don't choose—that's where it is. He won't work more than he can help. He's got a spell of writing to do now—just for a bit—copying for the law stationers, behind the market-place. These lawyers that comes down to the assizes always wants copying done, you see. There's for ever something turning up at the last moment—even after the trial's begun—that they wants to instruct counsel about. That's what people tells me; bless you! I don't pretend to understand it myself—it isn't likely, you know. I only repeats to you what I've heard others tell on."

Mark Voss was garrulously disposed. A certain good-humour possessed him, the result, as I judged, of his potations. But what was this he was saying? "The master" a sort of copying-clerk at the law stationers', behind the market-place! I had been permitting myself all kinds of surmises about "the master" and Mark Voss, his man, but I confess this had never occurred to me.

At first I had thought that he was insane, and that Mark was with him as his keeper. But now that seemed but an indifferent explanation of the case.

Why, then, should Mark lead a wholly idle and unprofitable life, supported by his master? What hold had the dependent upon his superior? Why did not the master at once rid himself of such a servant? I could not make the matter out at all.

"Don't you get trusting him," Mark said, presently. "He's got a carnying way with him, when he likes. He'll make out that he's much to be pitied, very likely. But he's a bad lot, is the master—a thorough bad lot, take my word for it, and I'm one as knows him well—too well, by a deal. He was a child in arms when I first set eyes on him. It wasn't such a lucky day for me when I first met the master, I can tell you."

There was the sound of a footstep. The master appeared, advancing towards the entrance. Mark raised the lanthorn, not to aid his master, but the better to see his face.

"You're in one of your nasty tempers," said Mark. "It's no use your denying it, for I can see it with half an eye. Your face is as white as a ghost's, and you're shivering as though you had the ague. And what's that upon your hands, not blood, surely not! I see it isn't—it's ink."

This was not a pleasant speech, nor one likely to have a pacifying effect upon an angry man.

The master stood glaring at his servant, as though longing to spring at him.

"Stand back!" cried Mark. "None of that. Don't try to come that game. I know you'd like to kill me, if you dared. But, take care; we're not alone. There's a witness here. Stand back, or it will be the worse for you."

With an effort the master controlled himself.

"There's money for you," he said, and he flung at Mark a handful of silver and copper coins. Some of them struck on his face rather severely.

"You know what you deserve," said Mark, holding up a threatening forefinger. "You deserve to be taken before the judge sitting there in court. You ought to be made an example of, you ought. Hanging's too good for the likes of you. But the judge would find some way of giving it you, I daresay. Justice would be done anyhows. I shouldn't have to ask twice for it."

"Hold your tongue, can't you?"

"Be civil, then, or take care I don't drag you before the judge. He'd see justice done me, in double quick time. And where would you be then, I should like to know?"

I withdrew. Curious as I was in regard to the two men, I did not care to be any longer a witness and an auditor of their angry discussion.

I retired to my own room, and having lighted a candle, was sitting at the table, on which I had unrolled a map, drawn on a large scale, of a portion of the neighbouring country through which our line was to pass. I was noting in pencil the direction of the railway, with memoranda as to gradients, &c.

"The master" entered abruptly. Then, as though recollecting himself, he paused, and stood for a few moments with an irresolute air near the door.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I'm intruding upon you, I know. But, you must think all so strange here, and, worse than that, so shameful. I would explain matters if I could, but that can hardly be. For myself, it doesn't matter so much; I'm used to it. But you must have been used to such a very different state of things. I really think that you'd—that it would be well for you to leave us. The Red House is no place for you. And Mark is such a scoundrel. You heard him just now! I could have struck him dead for his insolence; he deserved no less. No! I don't quite mean that, either. But it was hard to bear, wasn't it?"

"Why do you bear it? Why don't you get rid of him? He's your servant, isn't he?"

"Well, yes. He's my servant, after a fashion. But you don't know how hard it would be to get rid of him. I can't well explain it, but it would be very difficult. So old a servant, you see. I detest him, but I can't bring myself to turn him adrift."

He spoke with a curiously evasive air.

"Not but what it's too bad, a great deal too bad. He grows worse and worse. He's most abusive, he's rarely sober, and he won't do a stroke of work. I have to support him whether I like it or not, and I don't like it. But I take care to earn as little as I can, for the more I earn the more he wants. And he spends every farthing on drink. So I only work now and then, by fits and starts, as it were. I earn enough to keep body and soul together: only that. But I've said enough about myself and that wretch Mark. More than enough, you'll be thinking. You're welcome here; stay as long as you like, for that matter. I don't grudge you the shelter of this tumble-down old place; only, when all's said, the Red House, in its present state, is hardly a place for you to be living at. What's that? A map of the county? It's on a very large scale."

I explained to him the object of the map, and my occupation in regard to it.

"I wonder whether Mervyn Court is marked down on it?"

"Yes. I know it is, for I was there today. We're going to cut through the park."

"What a shame! I mean I'm very sorry to hear it. The poor old park!"

"The house is a ruin."

"Yes. It was nearly burnt down some years ago."

"You know it well?"

"Very well. I ought to. I was born there. It belonged to my family for many a long year. But what am I saying? That's a very old story, now. And so you're going to carry your line through the park! Well, why not? What's the park to me?"

He had moved from the table, and was standing by the fire, leaning against the mantelpiece. His face was in shadow; it wore, I could see, a subdued and even pained expression. His voice was low and melancholy of tone; he spoke in a self-communing way.

"What's the park to me now?" he repeated. "It was something once, but that's all over now. And the court-house—it was thought to be a fine place, a show place; people came from miles round to look at it. Well, it's a blackened ruin now: like my life—like my life!" He was silent for a few moments.

"I'm intruding," he said, presently. "I've no right, I feel that, to trouble you in this way. Pray pardon me. When you go from here, it is probable that we shall not meet again. I would only ask you to think as well of me as you can. I mean, don't bear too hardly upon me; although, I admit it, I deserve my fate. Think me mad, if you will. I know my words must sound very strange to you. Think me mad. Perhaps that will be best. And so good night, and good-bye."

He bowed his head, and without another word strode from the room. I was left alone to muse over the strangeness of his speech.

CHAPTER V.

Mervyn Court had belonged to his family, so he had admitted. I had noted it in the course of the morning. Of the house itself, little enough remained; but there could be no question that Mervyn Court had been a very noble property. Who was this man, then? Was he the victim of a delusion? No, there had been nothing, as it seemed to me, of craziness in his discourse, although he had bidden me think him mad.

A loud knock at the door.

"Come in."

Mark Voss entered, unsteadily, for he was far from sober. He advanced in some haste, as though fearing to fall if he walked slowly, and stood half leaning upon the table, and clutching the back of a chair, the better to support himself.

"The master's been here," he said, thickly. "Don't deny it, because I heard him talking. He thought I was asleep, but I wasn't. Now take care. I've come to warn you. Don't you have no dealings with him. Don't put no confidence in him. Distrust him, keep him at arm's length, or as sure as fate he'll be doing you some mischief."

"Nonsense!"

"Is it nonsense? You'll not find it so."

"What harm can he do me?"

"Every harm, when the fit takes him. Murder, perhaps; who knows?"

"Murder?"

"Why not? Can't you see murder in his eyes? I can, times and oft. There's a red glare comes into his eyes, I tell you; and he means death to you, if you but let him come near enough. He's a murderous villain, if there ever was one."

"You're mad to say so."

"Mad, am I? A likely story. As if I didn't know the master after all these years."

"You're ungrateful then. Doesn't the master, as you call him, work for you and keep you? I don't often see *you* working."

"I take care of the house. And didn't I tidy up your rooms for you? The master says you're to pay nothing for them—that it's *his* house; and so it is, that's true enough; it's his own freehold—the last scrap left him of his property. Still, you know, a poor man such as me likes a few odd shillings nows and thens to buy whisky with, or 'baccy, or what not. He can't get on without such like. No, I don't do much work; that's true; I can't; it isn't in me to do much work. But I do deserve something for tidying up your rooms for you, now, don't I? And it's true what I told you about the master. He's all I said he was; a murderous wretch, if there ever was one. You don't believe it?"

"Frankly, I don't."

"You don't believe he ever tried to murder me?"

"He doesn't like you—he hates you—very likely; but for wishing to take your life——"

"Yah!" he cried, with an air of extreme disgust, and an impatient stamping of his foot upon the ground, "it makes me sick to hear you talk. Defend him, do; pity him; make him out a kind of saint! Yet you'll have to hark back to the truth after all. And you'll know what he really is when you wake up some fine morning and find his hot murderous hands upon you. Yah! Why, look here. Doesn't that look like murder?" As he spoke he bared his throat, roughly pulling aside his ragged beard, and exposed a long, angry-looking scar, left by what must have been a very formidable wound. It was hard to believe that a man could have received such an injury and have lived after it.

"You mean——"

"That he done that. Now, mayn't I call him a murderous wretch?"

"If——" I began.

"If?" he repeated, scornfully. "Have your throat hacked at like that, and you won't talk about 'ifs'!"

I could say nothing in reply to this. My amazement was too great.

"Perhaps you'll allow now that I know more about the master than you do. Perhaps now you'll think I haven't had such an easy time of it, living alone with him all these long years, and not knowing what might be going to happen from one moment to another. Perhaps now you'll own I may as well as not let him go on working to keep the two of us; though, drat him, he'll work as little as he can, to starve me and spite me if he could. What, would you have *me* work for the likes of him? No. I've done enough for him, and suffered enough for him, if it comes to that. As for getting rid of me, he couldn't do it; if he tried never so, he couldn't. And he dursn't. I'd have the law of him. I'd have him punished for trying to murder me. You see if I wouldn't."

"But the man's mad."

"Who says so? Mad? A kind of cunning mad, then; mad enough to commit murder, and cunning enough to keep unhung for it. Mad, eh? Don't you trust him. Don't you get nearer to him than you would to a tiger in a wild beast show; or, leastways, have your pistol ready and keep your powder dry; or have a sharp knife handy about you, for there is no knowing what may happen; and may the Lord have mercy upon us all. And so good night. And, as I told you before, 'keep your door locked'!"

CHAPTER VI.

I WAS in the neighbourhood of Mervyn Court on the following day.

The ruins had the reputation of being haunted, I learned, and even the park was viewed as a disagreeable sort of place to be in alone, after dark.

The property had belonged time out of mind to the Helston family, of whom, it was believed, there was now no survivor. These were "a wild lot," my informant stated, and had been so for generations. It was like father, like son, with them all. Something of an hereditary taint of insanity there might have been among them. As much had many a time been said of them, at any rate. The old court-house had been the scene of many a strange event. It had almost stood a siege in Cromwell's time, when it had been pretty well battered about by his troopers and cannoneers. It had been restored, nearly rebuilt, about a century later, after which time little of the original building, which was of Henry the Seventh's date, could be discerned. The fire took place some ten years since. That was in the time of the last of the Helstons. It was said, and generally believed at the time, that he lost his life in the fire. But there came to be two opinions on the subject afterwards. No one was forthcoming, however, who could plainly assert as a fact within his own knowledge that the last of the Helstons was yet alive.

I had some difficulty in eliciting even this information. The old man with whom I conversed on the subject spoke with evident reluctance. He was the village sexton, I think; at any rate he possessed the church keys and conducted me over the church, being very particular to point out the many monuments in its chancel, erected to the memory of various members of the Helston family. It was clear to me that he knew more than he cared to tell. He replied to my inquiries civilly enough, but his answers were but brief. Possibly he detected what was indeed the truth, that the motive of my investigations could not pretend to be much more than idle curiosity.

But I grew more and more interested, and pressed him with further questions. He became, perhaps, accustomed to the sound of his own voice; he lived but a lonely life, it was clear; and gradually he was stirred to communicativeness. And then one of my inquiries acted as a sort of pass-word.

"Do you know the name of Mark Voss?"

"What!" he cried, with a start. "Do you know the name? Then why question me about Mervyn Court and the Helston family? You must know as much as I do about them, if not more."

"No, indeed. I know little more of Mark Voss than his name, and the fact that he served the family for many years, although in what capacity I can scarcely tell you."

"He managed the boats and the fishing; had charge of the water-meadows; and was a sort of under-gamekeeper as well. The river runs through the park, as you can see for yourself any time. People call it 'the lake,' but it's really the river banked up, and its course altered a little. There used to be very good fishing there, and it was Mark Voss's business to see about it. But he was a very bad character, was Mark Voss—a common, illiterate, evil-speaking, and evil-looking fellow. Yet he contrived somehow to acquire great influence over the young squire. They were always together, hand-and-glove. The squire loved sport; he was never a lad that cared for his books, although, of course, he'd been put in the way of having the best education. But nothing would do; he must be always hunting, or shooting, or fishing. And his favourite, Mark, was ever with him; although he was no fit companion for a young gentleman. But Mark was clever at finding sport for him, or what's called sport: vermin to be killed, or, maybe, a badger to be baited, or something of cock-fighting to be ventured on the quiet. And there was smoking, and drinking, and rioting until the court-house seemed turned into the worst sort of tavern, and all the neighbourhood round about—I mean the respectable people, for some were willing enough to join in the revelling—cried shame upon young Helston and his goings on. But he wasn't in his right mind, that was the plain truth of it. There's been something wrong in the head about a many of the Helstons. They do say that insanity was brought into the family by the Spanish wife that old Jasper Helston married beyond the seas, and treated so cruelly, after he'd got her here up at the Court away from her friends. I should have thought him mad from all the stories told of him; but, no, they say the madness began with the children born of his Spanish wife. She, poor wretch, died raving in an asylum—there's no question about that. Well she might go mad, being cursed with such a husband! But that's a long time back. The madness showed itself in the last squire before very long—he was quite a young fellow still—and then there was rare trouble indeed at the court-house. But you've heard the story. It made noise enough at the time."

He was so confident that I was well informed upon the subject, that it was with difficulty he could be brought to enter into any details in regard to it.

"There was a quarrel at last. It was only to be expected; the friendship between Mark and the young squire could only end like that. I can't rightly tell you all about it, even if I was so inclined; and I'm bound to say it's not a story such as an honest man need take pleasure in either telling over or listening to. They fell out; it was about a woman, if you must know. Mark had behaved like the villain he always was. The squire was bitterly angry, jealous, and violent; he cried like a child; threw himself upon the ground, and writhed and grovelled there like one in convulsions; stamped and screamed with passion; swore by all he held sacred that he would be revenged to the full for all the wrongs Mark Voss had done to him and to her. Then the mad fit took him. At least, to my thinking, he must have been mad."

"Well—and then?"

"You know what happened. One morning Mark Voss was found in his bed, dreadfully wounded. It seemed impossible that he could recover. He was insensible—speechless. The crime had been committed with a sharp hunting-knife. Suspicion fell upon the squire. It seemed scarcely possible that any other but he could have been guilty of the cruel act. His quarrel with Mark had only happened a day or two before. He had been heard to threaten him—to swear that he would have his life. Who could doubt his guilt after that?"

"He was tried for the attempted murder?"

"No, there you're wrong. He was never put upon his trial. Not because he was mad, stark mad—although that would have been good reason enough for his escape. But—there was no evidence against him."

"Why not? Mark recovered."

"But he declined to say a word upon the subject. He could not be forced to speak, and he would bring no charge against the young squire. Without Mark's evidence no conviction was possible. From that time they were friends again, or seemed to be so, although there were plenty to say that the two kept together because the squire was mad, and Mark Voss was his keeper. Anyhow, Mark fastened upon him—was provided for for life. While the squire possessed a penny piece Mark was sure of half of it, although it was freely said that they hated each other, that not a scrap of the old liking now remained between them. So things went on again, very bad and shameful, indeed, up at the Court, when the fire came. It broke out in Mark's room. It was with the greatest difficulty that he could be saved, for his door was found to be fastened on the outside. However, he saved himself by jumping from the window at the risk of his neck. The fire was the work of an incendiary, so all agreed. It was the squire himself they suspected, though few cared to say as much. After that there seemed to be an end both of the squire and Mark Voss. They left this country for good, and I can't say that there was a soul left to be sorry over their going away."

"Is it known what became of them?"

"Well, the squire was ruined, over and over again. The property here was seized by his creditors, who put it into Chancery, as I believe, and there it's remained ever since. The squire, it was said, went abroad; of course with Mark Voss. I can tell you nothing more about him for certain. I don't believe he's ever set foot since in the park here, though there's people to tell you they've seen his ghost walking about alongside the river, with Mark Voss following him closely, pointing to the wound in his throat; and I've heard, too, say that he's been met in the town yonder, strangely altered from what he was, yet still the same Squire Helston. I know the Helstons did own an old house or two up in the town yonder, but whether he's really there or not is more than I can say. Only one thing is very certain. If Squire Helston's living there, Mark Voss isn't far off. He always stuck to the squire like a horse-leech; and if they're both living, Mark Voss is sticking close to him still, I'll go bail. That's all I can tell you, sir, about Mervyn Court and the last of the Helstons. Thank you, sir, much obliged. Good morning, sir."

CHAPTER VII.

On my return to the town I packed up all my possessions and quitted the Red House forthwith. I entertained a great reluctance to remaining there another night. I paid Mark Voss the five shillings rent I had rendered myself liable for. "The master" I did not see. He was at work, presumably, at the law stationers'. Mark expressed no surprise at the suddenness of my departure. He was civil enough, if he might have been more sober. I removed to a pleasant village some few miles distant and easily accessible by the railway. But my stay in that part of the country was not destined to be of long duration. I was tempted to quit England by the offer of a very well-paid appointment upon an Italian line then in course of construction. I was absent some five years altogether.

I never again set eyes upon the Red House, upon Mark Voss, or upon "the master." Yet something I heard of them.

I had been away six months or so, when, studying by chance a London newspaper, then some ten days old, I found myself reading a paragraph with the conventional heading of "Awful Tragedy—Suspected Murder." From the description it soon became clear to me that the scene of the crime—for crime it was, beyond all question—was the Red House, and the victim, Mark Voss.

A dead body had been discovered in an empty red-brick building, in the immediate neighbourhood of the assize town, of which I have written. The house was in a ruinous, dismantled state; it had long been an eyesore and a source of annoyance and reproach to the authorities, who had, however, been without power to interfere, the house being private property. The body exhibited signs of very violent treatment—was, indeed, cruelly injured. The peculiar circumstances of the case precluded the notion of suicide. The house had been deserted some days before the police, upon the invitation of the neighbours, had been induced to force an entry, when they encountered the dreadful spectacle of the dead body. Two men, it was said, had resided in the house, but little was known of them. They had for some time been viewed with suspicion by the police, who entertained an idea that they had been engaged in coining. One of the men, however, was stated to be of superior education, and to have from time to time earned small sums by writing for the well-known law-stationers in the vicinity of the market-place. The murdered man rarely quitted the house. It was supposed that his name was Mark, but no one seemed to be sure of the fact. The other man had disappeared altogether. The police had been busily engaged in making inquiries concerning him, and were understood to be upon his traces; for obvious reasons, however, they had withheld from publication such discoveries as they had made.

I read subsequently that an inquest had been held upon the body of Mark Voss, and that a verdict had been returned of "Wilful murder" by some person or persons unknown. After that the matter seemed gradually to drop out of the newspapers, and to fade from public attention. The murder of Mark Voss was added to the long list of unpunished crimes. The arrest of "the master," the last of the Helstons, was never accomplished to my knowledge. Certainly no further tidings of him ever reached my ears.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THERE was a "scene" that evening at Ivy Lodge—not the less a "scene" in that it was conducted on genteel methods. Mrs. Algernon Errington inflicted on her husband, during dinner, a recapitulation of all her wrongs and injuries which could be covertly hinted at. She would not broadly speak out her meaning before "the servants." The phrase shaped itself thus in her mind from old habit. But, in truth, "the servants" were represented by one plump-faced damsel in a yellow print gown, into which her person seemed to have been stuffed by means of considerable force, and with less reference to the natural shape of her body than to the arbitrary outlines of the case made for it by a Whitford dressmaker.

This girl had succeeded to Slater, who resigned her post after a trial of some six weeks' duration. Castalia, in despair at this desertion, had written to Lady Seely to send her a maid from London forthwith. But to this application she received a reply to the effect that my lady could not undertake to find any one who would suit her niece, and that her ladyship thought Castalia had much better make up her mind to do without a regular lady's-maid, and take some humbler attendant, who would make herself generally useful.

"I always knew Slater wouldn't stay with you," wrote Lady Seely; "and you won't get any woman of that kind to stay. You can't afford to keep one. Your uncle is fairly well; but poor Fido gives me a great deal of unhappiness. He eats nothing."

Not by any means from conviction or submission to the imperious advice of Lady Seely, but under the yoke of stern necessity, Castalia had consented to try a young woman of the neighbourhood, "highly recommended." And this abigail, in her tight yellow gown, was the cause of Mrs. Algernon's reticence during dinner. The poor lady might, however, have spared herself this restraint, if its object were to keep her servants in the dark as to domestic disagreements; for no sooner had Lydia (that was the abigail's name) reached the kitchen, than she and Polly, the cook, began a discussion of Mr. and Mrs. Algernon Errington's private affairs, which displayed a surprising knowledge of very minute details, and an almost equally surprising power of piecing evidence together.

When Lydia was gone, Algernon lit a cigar, and drew up his chair to the fireside, where he sat silent, staring at his elegantly-slippered feet on the fender. Castalia rose, fidgeted about the room, walked to the door, stopped, turned back, and, standing directly opposite to Algernon, said querulously, "Do you mean to remain here?"

"For the present, yes; out of consideration for you. You dislike me to smoke in the drawing-room, do you not?"

"Why should you smoke at all?"

Algernon raised his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, crossed one leg over the other, and made no answer. His wife went away, and sitting down alone on a corner of the sofa in her little drawing-room, cried bitterly for a long time.

She was made to raise her tear-stained face by feeling a hand passed gently over her hair. She looked up, and found her husband standing beside her. "What's the matter, little woman?" he asked, in a half-coaxing, half-bantering tone, like one speaking to a naughty child, too young to be seriously reproved or argued with.

Now, although Castalia was haughty by education and insolent by temper, she had very little real pride and no dignity in her character. To be noticed and caressed by Algernon was to her a sufficient compensation for almost any indignity. There was but one passion of her nature which had any chance of resisting his personal influence, and that passion had never yet been fully aroused, although frequently irritated. Her jealousy was like a young tiger that had never yet tasted blood.

"What's the matter, little woman?" repeated Algernon, seating himself beside her, and putting his arm round her waist. She shrugged her shoulders fretfully, but at the same time nestled herself nearer to his side. She loved him, and it put her at an immense disadvantage with him.

"Don't you mean to vouchsafe me an answer, Mrs. Algernon Ancram Errington?"

"Oh, I daresay you're very sorry that I am Mrs. Errington. I have no doubt you repent."

"Really! And is that what you were crying for?"

No reply.

"It looks rather as if you repented, madam!"

"Oh, you know I don't; unless you like other people better than you like me!"

"'Other people' don't cry in my company."

"No; because they don't care for you. And because they're——they're nasty, artful minxes!"

"Hear, hear! A charming definition! Castalia, you are really 'impayable' sometimes. How my lord would enjoy that speech of yours!"

"No, he wouldn't. Uncle Val would never enjoy what vexed me. My lady might; nasty, disagreeable old thing!"

"There, I can agree with you. But now that we have relieved our feelings, and spoken our minds on that score, suppose we converse rationally?"

"I don't want to converse rationally."

"Why not?"

"Because that means that you are going to scold me."

"Well—that might be highly rational, certainly; only I never do it."

"Well, but you'll manage to make out that I'm in the wrong and you're in the right, somehow or other."

"Cassy, I want you to write a letter."

"A letter! Whom do you want me to write to?"

Her tears were completely dried, and she looked up at him with a faint smile on her countenance, which, however, looked rueful enough, with red nose and swollen eyes.

"You must write to my lord, and get him to help us with a little money."

Her face fell.

"Ask Uncle Val for money again, Ancram? It is such a short time since he sent me some!"

"And to-morrow, at this hour, it will be 'such a short time' since you had your dinner! Nevertheless, I suppose you will want another dinner."

"I—I don't think Uncle Val can afford it, Ancram."

"Leave that to him. Afford it? Pshaw!"

Algernon made the little sharp ejaculation in a tone expressive of the most impatient contempt.

"But do we really—is it absolutely necessary for us to beg of my uncle again?"

"Not at all. Do just as you please," answered her husband, rising and walking away from the sofa to a distant chair. Castalia's eyes followed him piteously. "But what can I say?" she asked. "What excuse can I make? I hate to worry Uncle Val. It isn't as if he had more money than he knew what to do with. And if Lady Seely knew about his helping us, she would lead him such a life!"

"Do as you please. It would be a thousand pities to worry your uncle. Let all the worry fall on me."

He took up a book and threw himself back in his chair, as if he had dismissed the subject.

"I don't know what to do!" exclaimed Castalia, with fretful helplessness. At length, after sitting silent for some time, twisting her handkerchief backwards and forwards in her fingers, she got up and crossed the room to her husband's chair.

"Ancram!" she said softly.

"Eh? I beg your pardon!" looking up with an appearance of great abstraction, as if the perusal of his book had absorbed all his attention.

"I wish to do what will please you. I only care to please you in the world. But—can't you explain to me a little better why I must write to Uncle Val?"

Explain! Of course he would! He desired nothing better. He had brought her to a point at which encouragement was needed, not coldness. And with the singular flexibility that belonged to him, he was able immediately to plunge into an animated statement of his present situation, which sufficed to persuade his bearer that no cause of conduct could be so desirable, so prudent—nay, so praiseworthy, as the course he had suggested.

To be sure the details were vague, but the general impression was vivid enough. If Algernon's pictures were a little inaccurate in drawing, they were at least always admirably coloured. And the general impression was this: that there never had been a person of such brilliant abilities and charming qualities as Algernon Ancram Errington so unjustly consigned to obscurity and poverty. And no contributions to his comfort, luxury, or well-being were too much to expect and claim from the world in general, and his wife's relations in particular. Common honesty—common decency, almost—would compel Lord Seely to make all the amends in his power, for having placed Algernon in the Whitford Post-office. And there was an insinuation very skilfully and delicately mixed with all the seemingly spontaneous outpourings of Algy's conjugal confidence — an insinuation which affected the flavour of the whole, as an accomplished cook will contrive to mingle garlic in a ragoût, never coarsely obtrusive, and yet distinctly perceptible — to the effect that the hand of Miss Castalia Kilfinane had been somewhat thrust upon her charming husband; and that the family owed him no little gratitude for having been kind enough to accept it.

Poor Castalia had an uneasy feeling, at the end of his discourse, that Algernon had been a victim to her great relations, and, in some dim way, to herself. But the garlic was so admirably blended with the whole mass, that it was impossible for her to pick it out, or resent it, or do anything but declare her willingness to help her husband by any means in her power.

"Why, my dear girl, it is as much for your sake as for mine! And as to the necessity for it, I must tell you what Minnie Bodkin said to me to-day. Minnie is an excellent creature, full of friendly feeling—a little too conceited, and fond of lecturing"—Castalia's face brightened—"but much must be excused to an afflicted invalid, who never meets her fellow-creatures on equal terms."

Castalia looked almost happy. But she said, "As to her affliction, it seems to me that she has been growing much stronger lately."

"Yes; I am glad to think so too. But let the best happen that can be hoped—let the disease, that has kept her helpless on her couch all these years, be overcome—still she must always be so lame as to make her an object of pity."

"Poor thing! I daresay it does warp her mind a good deal. What did she say to you?"

Algernon recapitulated a part of Minnie's warnings, but gave them such a turn as to make it appear that the greatest wrath of the Whitford tradesmen was directed against his wife. "They have a narrow kind of provincial prejudice against you, Cassy, on account of your being a 'London fine lady.' Me they know; and, in their great condescension, are pleased to approve of."

"Oh, everybody likes you better than me, of course," answered Castalia, simply. "But I don't care for that if you will only like me better than anybody."

The genuine devotion with which this was said would have touched most men. It might have touched Algernon, had he not been too much engrossed in mentally composing the rough draft of Castalia's letter to her uncle, and putting his not inconsiderable powers of plausible persuasion to the task of making it appear that his wife's personal extravagance was the chief cause of their need for ready money.

"Don't tell him that I even know of your writing. My lord will be more willing to come down handsomely if he thinks it's for you only, Cassy," said Algernon, as he drew up his wife's writing-table for her, placed a chair, opened her inkstand, and performed several little acts of attention with a really charming grace and gallantry.

So Castalia, writing almost literally what her husband dictated—although he kept saying at every sentence, "My dear child, you ought to know best how to address your uncle!" "Well, I really don't know, but I think you might put it thus;" and so forth — completed an appeal to Lord Seely to anticipate by nearly a quarter the allowance he continued to make her for her dress out of his private purse, and, if possible, to increase its amount.

One such appeal had already been made and responded to by a gift of money. It had been made immediately after the arrival of the newly-married couple in Whitford, on the ground of the unforeseen expenses attendant on installing themselves in their new habitation. In answering it Lord Seely had written kindly, but with evident disapproval of the step that had been taken. "I cannot, Castalia," he said, "bid you keep anything secret from your husband, and yet I can scarcely help saying that I wish he did not know of the cheque I inclose. I fear he is disposed to be reckless in money matters; and nothing encourages such a disposition more than the idea that aid can be had from friends for the asking. Ancram will recollect a serious conversation I had with him the evening before your marriage, and I can only now reiterate what I then assured him of—that it will be impossible for me to repeat the assistance I gave him on that occasion."

"What assistance was that, Ancram?" asked Castalia, who knew not a word of the matter.

"Oh, I believe my lord made me the munificent present of two pair of breeches, and an old coat and waistcoat, or so."

"Made you a present of an old coat and breeches! What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean that he paid a twopenny outstanding tailor's bill for me. And he writes now as if he had conferred the most overwhelming obligation."

The fact was that Lord Seely had discharged a great number of Algernon's debts; all of them, as his lordship imagined. But there was clearly no need of troubling Castalia with these details.

When the letter was finished and sealed, Castalia still sat musingly tracing unmeaning figures with the point of her pen on the blotting-book. At length she said with some hesitation, "Ancram, how is it that we spend so much money? I don't think I am very extravagant."

"'So much money!' Good Heavens, Castalia—but you really have no conception of these things. Our whole income, and twice our income, is a miserable pittance. The Dormers pay their butler more."

She was again silent for a little while. Then she said, "Isn't there anything we could do without?"

Her husband looked at her in astonishment. It was a quite unexpected suggestion on Castalia's part. "Could you be kind enough to point out anything?" he asked drily. She looked somewhat cast down by his tone, but answered, "There's that last case of wine from town—the Rhine wine. Don't you think we might send it back and do with a bottle of sherry, now and then, from the Blue Bell? Your mother finds that very good."

"Pshaw!" with the accustomed sharp, impatient contempt. "My mother knows no more about wine than a baby. To drink bad wine is absolutely to poison oneself. I can't do it, and I don't mean to let you do it, either. And when one knows that it is only a question of a few months, more or less, and that directly I get a better berth these greedy rascals will be paid their extortionate bills in full—positively, Castalia, it seems to me childish to talk in that way!"

It was the same with the one or two other suggestions of retrenchment she ventured to make. Algernon showed conclusively (conclusively enough to satisfy his hearer, at all events) that it would be absolutely imprudent, on their part, to make any open retrenchment. All these sharks would come round them at once, if they smelt poverty. "I know these gentry better than you do, Castalia," said he. "There is no way of getting on with them except by not being in a hurry to pay them. Nothing spoils tradespeople so much as any over-alacrity of that kind. They immediately conclude that you can't do without them!"

"Oh, they're disgustingly impudent creatures, these Whitford tradespeople! There is no doubt in the world about that," said Castalia, in perfect good faith. "Only I thought you seemed to be made uneasy by what Miss Bodkin said to you on the subject."

"To be sure! But, my dear girl, your method would never answer! I do want money, very badly. And I do hope and expect—as I think I have some right to do—that my lord will assist us without delay, and without making one of his intolerable prosy preachments on the occasion. And we must have a few pounds to go on with, and stop the mouths of these rapacious rascals. But no retrenchment, Castalia! No Blue Bell sherry! Good Heavens, it makes one bilious to think of it! I really cannot sacrifice my digestion to advance the commercial prosperity of Whitford. And when one considers it, why should we destroy our peace of mind by worrying ourselves? Lord Seely has got us into this scrape, and Lord Seely must get us out of it. Voilà tout!"

After that the rest of the evening was spent very harmoniously. Algernon could not repress two or three prodigious yawns, but he politely concealed them. And when Castalia went to her pianoforte, he woke up at the conclusion of an intricate fantasia, quite in time to thank her for the performance, and to praise its brilliancy. In a word, Castalia told herself that she had not passed so agreeable an evening for many weeks, although it had certainly begun in an unpromising way. So softened was she, indeed, by this gleam of happiness, that several times she was on the point of making a confession to her husband, and entreating his forgiveness. But she could not bear to risk bringing a cloud over the light of his countenance, which was the only sunshine in her life. "Ancram would be so angry!" was a thought that checked back words which were on her lips a dozen times. "And since the matter is all over, and he need never know anything about it, I may as well hold my tongue."

It needed, however, no confession on Castalia's part to convince Algernon that she had opened his secretaire, and taken Minnie Bodkin's letter thence, instead of having found it lying open on his table, as she had said. For on the next morning, when he entered his private room at the office, his first action was to try the little secretaire, which was unlocked. He then remembered that, after having secured that repository of his private papers, he had re-opened it, to throw Minnie's note into a drawer of it; and, having been called away at that moment, must have forgotten to re-lock it.

"Infernally provoking!" muttered Algernon to himself, as he stood looking at the little cabinet with gloomy, anxious brows. Then, having first bolted the door of his room, he made a thorough search throughout the secretaire. "Nothing disturbed! She probably flew off to Dr. Bodkin's house directly after reading Minnie's note; and that lay in the little drawer right in front. It would be the first she opened."

Then he sat down in a mighty comfortable arm-chair, which was placed in front of an official-looking desk, and meditated so deeply that he forgot to unbolt the door, and was roused by Mr. Gibbs tapping at it, and desiring to speak with him on business.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Mr. Gibbs's errand was not a pleasant one. He came to speak to his chief of complaints that had reached the office as to lost and missing letters. The most serious case was that of a man living in the neighbourhood of Duckwell, who complained that a money letter had never reached him, although it had been posted in Bristol three weeks back. Some inquiries had previously been made, but without result. And now the Duckwell man declared he would make a fine fuss, and bring the matter before the very highest authorities, if his letter were not forthcoming.

"What does the bumpkin mean, Gibbs?" asked Algernon, impatiently tapping with his fingers on the desk before him.

"I'm afraid he'll give us a deal of bother, sir," returned Mr. Gibbs, slowly. "And I can't understand what has come of the letter. It's very awkward."

"Very awkward for him, if he really has lost his money. But I should not be surprised to learn that it never was posted at all."

"Humph! I don't know. He swears that the sender at Bristol can prove that it was posted."

"And why the deuce do people go on sending bank-notes by post, without the least care or precaution? One must have been connected with a post-office in order fully to appreciate the imbecility of one's fellow-creatures!"

"I don't know that it was bank-notes, sir. It may have been a cheque."

"Oh, depend upon it, it was whatever was stupidest to send, and most calculated to give trouble; if it was sent, that is to say! If it was sent!"

"I can't call to mind such a thing happening for twenty years back; not in this office. But lately there seems to be no end to things going wrong."

"Well, don't distress yourself about it, Gibbs. I have full reliance on you in every way."

"Oh no, sir! It is unpleasant, but I don't know that I specially need distress myself about it."

"Only because you have had the uncontrolled management of the office, Gibbs. And it is too bad, when one has worked so conscientiously as you have, to be worried by blundering bumpkins. I assure you, Gibbs, I am constantly singing your praises to Lord Seely. I tell him frankly, that if it were not for you, I don't know in the least how I should fulfil my onerous duties here! When I'm removed from this place, the powers that be won't have far to look for my successor."

This was the most explicit word that had yet fallen from Mr. Errington on the subject of his subordinate's promotion. And it decidedly gratified Mr. Obadiah Gibbs. Nevertheless, that steady individual was not so elated by the prospect held out to him, as to dismiss from his mind the business he had come to speak about. "It is the most unaccountable thing!" said he. "Three or four cases of the kind within two months! And up to that time no office in the kingdom bore a better character than Whitford. I hope the thing may be cleared up. But it is next to impossible to trace a stolen letter. The Duckwell man—Heath, his name is; Roger Heath—says he is determined to complain to the Postmaster-General. I suppose we shall be having the surveyor coming to look after us. You see, it isn't like a solitary case. That's the worst of it. There's what you may term an accumulation, sir."

Whilst Mr. Gibbs poured forth his troubled mind in these and many more slow sentences, Algernon rose, took his hat, brushed it lightly with his glove, put it on, and was evidently about to depart. Gibbs ventured to lay his hand on his coat-sleeve to detain him. The clerk was not satisfied that the matter should be dismissed so lightly. It might not be possible to do anything, truly; but (in common with a great many other people) Mr. Obadiah Gibbs felt that, where efficacious action was impracticable, it was all the more desirable to mark the gravity of an unpleasant circumstance by copious talking of it. Life would become, in some sort, too frivolous and easy, if, when a matter clearly could not be remedied, every one agreed to say no more about it! A vast deal of sage eloquence would thus be choked and dammed up. And Mr. Gibbs, for his special part, was conscious of having some reputation amongst his fellow Wesleyans for a gift of utterance.

"I really don't know, sir, what to say to Roger Heath," he persisted.

"Oh—tell him inquiries will be made in the proper quarters."

"That, sir, has been said already. He has been here twice or thrice."

"Then tell him to go to the devil!" said Algernon, sharply jerking his arm away from the clerk's grasp, and walking off.

The pious and respectable Mr. Gibbs shook his head disapprovingly at this speech, and went back to his stool in the outer office with a lowering brow.

Algernon walked along the High-street, and turned down a narrow lane leading towards the river, and past one corner of the Grammar School. The boys were just coming out of school, with the usual shrill babble and rush. A party of Doctor Bodkin's private scholars were on their way to Whit-meadow.

"Good day, Ingleby," said Algernon, addressing the eldest of them, the same lad who had been Rhoda's squire in the tea-room on the night of Mrs. Algernon Errington's début in Whitford society. "Where are you off to?"

"We're going to have a row. I've got a boat, and we're going up the river as far as Duckwell-reach. We have leave from the doctor. Deuce of a job to get it, though!"

"Why?"

"Oh, because he's nervous about the river; thinks it dangerous, and all that."

"Well, you know, Ingleby," said a younger boy, with much eagerness, "lots of people have been drowned in that bit of the river between here and Duckwell-reach."

"Lots of people! Gammon!"

"Well, two, since I've been here!"

"Oh, I daresay. Well, if you funk it, you needn't come. There's plenty without you."

"You know I don't funk it for myself, Ingleby. I can swim."

"Yes, my friend. You wouldn't get into my boat if you couldn't. I'm on honour with the doctor to take none but swimmers," said Ingleby, turning to Algernon; "and of course that settles the matter. But, for my part, I should have thought anybody but the quite small boys might walk out of the Whit, if they tumbled into it."

"Oh no! You do our noble river injustice. You are not a Whitfordian, or you would know better than that. There are some very ugly places between here and Duckwell-reach; places where I wouldn't give much for your chance of getting out if once you fell in, swimmer though you are. Good-bye. A pleasant row to you."

The boys pursued their way to the boat, and Algernon, turning off at right angles when he reached the bottom of the lane, got into Whit-meadow through a turnstile at the foot of the Grammar School playground.

There was a footpath through the meadow, and some fields beyond, which made a pleasant walk enough in fine summer weather, and was then a good deal frequented. But at this season it was damp, muddy, and lonely. The day was fine, but the ground had been saturated by previous rains, and that part of the meadow nearest to the margin of the river was almost a swamp. The path continued to skirt the Whit for some miles, and as Algernon walked along it he saw the windings of the river shining in the sun, and presently there appeared on it the boat full of schoolboys. One of them wore a scarlet cap, and thus made a bright spot of colour in the landscape. The sound of their young voices was carried across the water to Algernon's ears.

He stood for a minute or so at the gate of his own garden, which ran down behind the house to the river path, and watched them. The thought crossed his mind that, if any accident should occur to the boat at that spot, there would be little chance of assistance reaching it quickly. Ivy Lodge was the last house on that side of the river, between Whitford and Duckwell-reach. And on the shore opposite not a living creature was to be seen, except some cattle grazing in the plashy fields.

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXIV. FOREBODING.

My uncle looked very thoughtful as we walked to the town together, and kept for some time an unusual silence.

"My dear Harry," said he, presently, "you know, I hope, that I am the last man in the world to ask you to reveal what the laws of hospitality teach you to keep secret, but Mark's behaviour has been so very strange to-day, that, unexplained, it may make my suspicions worse than the actual facts would warrant. In one word, then, do I do an injustice in concluding him to have become a sot?"

"Well, really, uncle, I don't like to say that; but he certainly drinks more than is good for him. A good deal more."

"Brandy?" inquired the rector, significantly; "aye, I thought so. It is my conviction that he was on the verge of delirium tremens this morning. Nothing else could account for the way in which he conducted himself in his brother's room. He was as white as a sheet, and trembled like a girl who is going to have her ears pierced for earrings. It is fortunate for Alec that his sister-in-law has got some pluck in her, for a more useless person in a sick room than her husband I never beheld. Then, at lunch, how he gulped down the wine—and very bad wine it is; I wonder how your stomach stands it, Harry!—till he gradually won back his wits and spirits. I am afraid poor Mark is going to the bad."

"Do you think his brother noticed it?" inquired I.

"Not to-day; he could notice nothing, poor fellow; he just answered the few questions that secretary creature put to him, and signed his name, while Mrs. Raeburn held him up; that was about all. But Alec has noticed it; told me of it, in fact, himself, when he was at Stanbrook; and, between ourselves, I think the knowledge of it had something to do with the disposition of his property. Mark was always speculative, he says, and under these sad circumstances would play ducks and drakes with any amount of money; which, indeed, is likely enough. I begin to think, even as matters stand, that we have done Mrs. Raeburn wrong in crediting her with parsimony."

"What, in shirking the halfpenny bridge, uncle?" cried I, laughing.

"Well, that was rather a striking instance of economy, I allow; but I have reason to believe that the Raeburns are not well off. Even with this immense allowance from Alec—of which, by-the-by, none of their neighbours know but ourselves—they have a difficulty to make both ends meet. So, in future, my dear boy, don't turn up your nose at Mrs. Raeburn's little side-dishes, or object to the sherry."

"My dear uncle," pleaded I, "it was you who objected to the sherry. I have only lifted up my voice against the ginger wine."

The rector laughed and jingled his keys. "Pooh, pooh, when I was at your time of life, nothing came amiss to me short of antimonial wine; if the quality is indifferent, then it will teach you moderation. Well, here we are at the doctor's; and I have a lot of things to get for your Aunt Eleanor."

So at Mr. Wilde's door we parted. For

a wonder he was at home, though just about to set out on his afternoon "round." He came forward to meet me with rather an anxious and inquiring look, but I thought little of that, since any one's arrival, to a doctor (with whom visits of ceremony are not common), must always portend something serious.

"Nothing wrong at the Priory, I hope?" were his first words.

"Nothing to be alarmed about, I believe; but Gertrude, that is, Miss Floyd——"

Mr. Wilde made an impatient motion with his hand, as though he would have said, "I know all about that, and even if I did not, what does it matter how you call her? Come to the case."

"She is not well," I went on. "There is not much the matter, as I understand, but she has had a return of those symptoms for which you recommended her change of air in the autumn."

"Who told you this, Sheddon?"

"Gertrude herself, last evening. I thought her looking very unwell, and she confessed to me that she had been feeling so; had been in great pain, indeed; but that Mrs. Raeburn had prescribed for her, and successfully. This morning, however, she did not appear, and is still in her room, and that is a bad sign, for Gertrude is not one to give in unless she is compelled, you know."

"Did she herself send you to fetch me?"

"No, she knows nothing of my coming; she hates to have any fuss made; and, besides, I think she has not much belief in your 'change of air' remedy, though it did her so much good last time. But I think you should see her, for she has no one to look after her except Mrs. Raeburn, whose time is almost wholly taken up with her other patient."

"Did Mrs. Raeburn tell you to come for me?"

"No; but her husband did. He quite agreed with my uncle (who has been over at the Priory this morning) that you should see Gertrude, for the reason I have mentioned—that Mrs. Raeburn has enough on her hands already."

"I see, I see," said Mr. Wilde, thoughtfully. "Then she doesn't even know that I have been sent for?"

"I suppose not. By-the-by, Mr. Raeburn, himself, had a momentary hesitation about my fetching you, lest you should not come professionally. He declares that you shall not see his brother, 'as a friend,' any longer, but must take your fee like a man."

"Then I shall not see his brother at all," observed Mr. Wilde, bluntly. "Indeed," added he, with a smile at his own vehemence, "there would be no use in my so doing. But, of course, Miss Floyd's case is a different matter. I will be with her within the hour, you may depend on that."

I returned to the Priory at once, by the way that, from the doctor's house, was the shorter—namely, through the garden, where, greatly to my surprise, I found Mrs. Raeburn, pacing up and down the great gravel walk. She walked with long steps, with head depressed and her hands clasped behind her, and so deep in thought was she, that she took no notice of my approach till I came quite close to her. Then she started, and gave me a not very pleasant look.

"I should have thought, Mr. Sheddon," said she, "that with John away, Mr. Raeburn could ill have spared your assistance in the office, this afternoon?"

If anything could be more impertinent and offensive than this speech, it was the manner in which it was spoken; the malice of the tone I could understand, but for the insolent triumph that mingled with it, I was utterly at a loss to account.

"I went into the town, madam, at Mr. Raeburn's own request," replied I, coldly, "to fetch the doctor."

"What?"

If I had said "the Asiatic cholera," she could not have looked more astonished, disgusted, and, I may add, alarmed. Her idea probably was, as I imagined, that the attorney, feeling himself indisposed after his luncheon (as indeed well he might), was about to incur the expense of a physician's visit.

"The doctor," repeated I, in the mildest of tones. "Your husband and my uncle both agreed that your constant attendance upon Mr. Alexander Raeburn would prevent your paying the necessary attention to Miss Floyd, and that, since she was no better this afternoon, Mr. Wilde ought to be sent for. I have, therefore, been to fetch him."

"You have, therefore, committed a piece of extreme impertinence, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Raeburn, vehemently. "What has your uncle, or what have you, to do with the arrangements in my house, or with Miss Floyd at all? If I thought her ill, do you suppose I should not have sent for Mr. Wilde, myself? Do you imagine that the miserable stipend which is paid for your maintenance here is so important to us that, for the sake of it, we are prepared to put up with any amount of interference. We are not Mr. Hastings's poor parishioners, that we should be subject to his guidance and dictation, I believe. He has meddled and marred enough in our affairs already, and I daresay not without his reward."

"You speak in enigmas, madam," said I. "I only know that my uncle came over here, to-day, at your husband's own request, and at great inconvenience to himself; and I should think it very unlikely that he was paid for it. As for myself, I have never done anything to offend you, that I am aware of; unless, perhaps, by showing some sympathy towards your brother-in-law at a time when you were not so passionately devoted to him as you are now."

When excessively angry, Mrs. Raeburn was wont to exhibit the unladylike peculiarity of gulping something down in her throat, and moistening her lips with her tongue, which, I believe, is the habit of some serpents before shooting out their fangs.

"You are a most simple and unself-seeking young gentleman, no doubt," sneered she. "It is quite a pity that such a disinterested youth should become a lawyer; at all events, I, for my part, regret exceedingly that he ever came here to learn his trade."

"Your hospitality and good manners are proverbial, my dear madam," returned I, with my best bow. If this woman intended, by her insults, to drive me out of the house, as she had once driven "Brother Alec," she would be disappointed, I reckoned; for on the day that I quitted the Priory—or at least thereabouts—I fully intended that Gertrude should quit it also.

"You talk of hospitality, young man," continued Mrs. Raeburn, suddenly, after a pause, during which she seemed to have in a great measure recovered the control of her temper, "but you have outraged mine, in making love to Gertrude."

Had this woman read my very thoughts, and was she now about to bid me quit her house for an offence which, however venial, I could not deny. In that case, what help could there be for me—and for Gertrude? Old Alec's warning, "Take care of Gerty," rang once more in my ears, and I felt sick at heart. The very emergency of the case, however, made me bold.

"I honestly confess, madam," said I, "that I have not only sought to win your cousin's love, but I have won it. I loved her before I became your guest; acquaintance with her under your roof has only made me more alive to her worth."

"You did not know, for instance, until you came here, that she was an heiress, perhaps?" observed Mrs. Raeburn, bitterly.

"Such is actually the fact, madam. It is waste of breath, I fear, to tell you that that knowledge has not moved me towards her in the least; yet so it is."

Mrs. Raeburn sniffed a sniff that was the quintessence of incredulity. "And you did not think it unbecoming to take advantage of my cousin's youth and simplicity in winning her affections, without applying in the first place to her guardian, my husband; or to her natural protector and counsellor, myself!"

I was silent, for I had certainly never dreamt of doing any such thing.

"You may tell me, perhaps," she went on in her didactic style (which showed she was quite herself again), "that Gertrude met you half way, and was therefore equally to blame——"

"To blame!" cried I, indignantly.

"Permit me to finish, sir. I say you may attempt to shelter yourself, under the plea that Gertrude might herself have made your attentions known to me. You would be so far right, in that she ought to have done so. When she becomes your wife, I hope you may never be reminded of her want of confidence to me by any concealment as regards yourself. It is, however, not a pleasing trait in a young woman."

That might or might not be. I thought to myself that Gertrude had many other pleasing traits, at all events, that would atone for the reticence in question; and if she had been charged with much worse things, I would cheerfully have forgiven her accuser, since those words, "when she becomes your wife," were sweeter to me than honey and the honeycomb. I had never heard them from any other lips, and to find them upon Mrs. Raeburn's, astonished and delighted me above all measure. She had made up her mind then, however she might regret the fact, that our union was decided upon, and showed herself submissive to Fate; and I began to entertain a sincere admiration for this remarkable woman—as a female philosopher.

Throughout this somewhat incisive talk of ours we had been drawing gradually near the house, and, at this moment, the keen ear of my companion caught the sound of the front-door bell, which announced Mr. Wilde's arrival, and she instantly hurried within doors. She accompanied the doctor to Gertrude's room, while I remained in the hall, awaiting with anxiety his report. Mrs. Raeburn and he came downstairs together, the former talking confidentially in low tones. It was her design, I fancied, to ignore my presence; but, after her late acknowledgment of my relations with Gertrude (however expressed), it was clear, by her own showing, that I had a right to put my questions.

"How did you find Gertrude?" said I, boldly, since I saw Mrs. Raeburn was resolved upon not leaving us alone. I had addressed myself to the doctor; but she answered for him.

"There is nothing to be alarmed about," said she, coldly.

"Nothing at present," added Mr. Wilde, in grave correction. "Miss Floyd's condition is, however, unsatisfactory to me. I have just been telling Mrs. Raeburn that the case is a perplexing one, and, if the symptoms do not abate, it will be for her to consider whether she should not call in another opinion."

"We have all of us, including Gertrude herself, Mr. Wilde, the most perfect confidence in your skill," observed Mrs. Raeburn, graciously. "If you have the least anxiety about the case, I hope you will look in to-morrow."

"I will certainly do that, madam," answered Mr. Wilde. "In the meantime, I must rely upon your judgment as to the administration of the medicine."

"That shall be attended to without fail, and by my own hands."

Mr. Wilde was by this time drawing on his gloves.

"How is your other patient to-day?" inquired he.

"Much the same; his condition, indeed, is exactly what your sagacity foresaw it would be. This afternoon he is somewhat fatigued, having had to undergo a business interview; else the change from day to day is scarcely perceptible."

"Just so. You will please to note very carefully any alteration of the symptoms with Miss Floyd. It is just possible that she may be quite herself to-morrow; whereas, as I told you——"

"We will hope for the best," interposed Mrs. Raeburn, cheerfully. "If care can effect it, you may rely upon finding a great improvement."

I had no opportunity, even had I had excuse, for further inquiry, for Mr. Wilde, having mounted his horse, here rode off at his usual speed; but I was very far from being satisfied with what little I had extracted from him. The case must, indeed, be a serious one, if a man of his skill acknowledged it to be "perplexing," and even suggested another opinion. I felt profoundly dejected; all the more so, perhaps, from the exhilaration I had experienced not half an hour ago. The happiness that I had then so securely counted upon seemed now gradually slipping from my grasp. I went to the office, and strove to forget my vague forebodings in pursuing my customary work. Had I taken up some favourite author, it would not, perhaps, have availed me better, for the enchanted wand of genius that can make us forget grief and want, and even the sharp sense of pain, is powerless to allay anxiety; but, as it was, I could do nothing but think this thought—"Suppose my darling were to die!" Even my occupation itself, whimsically cruel, suggested fears; the oft-repeated legal term, "whereas," reminded me of the doctor's parting words to Mrs. Raeburn. "It is just possible (i.e., a miracle might work it!) that she may be quite well to-morrow; whereas, as I told you——" What had he told her? What dark alternative had he prophesied in case there should not be an improvement? A chill at my heart was the reply.

Presently John Raeburn came in from his expedition, looking very pale and fagged. It would have been more obnoxious to my feelings, perhaps, if he had been lively and talkative as usual; yet his unaccustomed dejection intensified my gloom. His father and he scarce interchanged a word as to his proceedings, and presently they left the room together, and went up to brother Alec.

I was alone, and remained downstairs in that dreary house, which seemed to have become a hospital: muffled footsteps, muffled tones overhead, were the only sounds that broke the silence, except the ticking of the clock on the staircase and the melancholy monotone of Chico—"Dead, dead; think of that!" heard whenever his master's door was opened. If Death were not in that house already, he seemed to be standing at its threshold, with a finger on his fleshless lip.

WHAT WE DRINK.

Pure water naturally takes precedence, as the most ancient and universal beverage, of all others. But, this admission made, it is surprising with what skill and tenacity of purpose, men in all ages and countries have striven to supplement the innocuous properties of the cooling lymph. So widespread and general is this impulse, that it appears rather to merit the being classed as a deeply-implanted instinct than as a fashion or caprice. With the exception of certain savage tribes, who are abstainers on compulsion, no nation of absolute water-drinkers, save the Hindus, can be pointed out.

The immense antiquity of wine is vouched for both by sacred and profane tradition. The graceful Grecian legend of the triumphal march of Bacchus indicates an oriental origin for the grape; and, indeed, the original habitat of the vine may not improbably have been the Persian province of Shiraz, the wine of which long maintained its old renown, even under the cold shade of Mohammedanism. From Syria, from Asia Minor, and from Egypt, were gradually introduced the first vines of Southern Europe; while, as the Roman dominion spread, every year beheld a northward and westward extension of the wine-producing area. The ale and mead of the northern nations were gradually and partially displaced by the more generous liquor of the Roman conquerors. Vineyards, as the lingering local names yet indicate, existed in many parts of even the extreme north of England; and so late as the Plantagenet period the monks of many an English abbey stored their cellars with grape-juice of their own squeezing. In modern days, the cultivation of the vine is not found to answer in any higher latitude, than those of Bavaria and the Rheingau.

There is somewhat of obscurity as to the date at which ardent spirits were first distilled. It is, of course, certain that we owe the discovery, and the name, of alcohol to an Arabian chemist. But several of the scientific achievements of those learned Moors, whose research contrasted so honourably with the barbaric torpor of contemporary European intellect, are plausibly conjectured to have been previously known, not only to the Greeks, but to the priests of Egypt. It has been thought, on the strength of certain passages in chronicles of various epochs, that "strong waters" were in occasional use both among Jews and Gentiles, though whether these were true alcohol, or, as in the case of Hypocras and Metheglin, merely a concentration of wine thickened by long boiling and the addition of sugar, is not very clear. It is not disputed that the first alcohol consumed in Europe came from the Levant, was imported by Genoese and Venetian merchants, and by them resold to the traders of Flanders and the Hanseatic ports, by whom it was sparingly vended under the fanciful name of Eau de Vie, or Water of Life.

Under the general name of pombe, two distinct beverages are in high demand throughout Central Africa—the cider made from the ripe fruit of the plantain, and the coarse beer brewed from grain, and in some instances from beans. On the West Coast, the semi-spirituous palm-wine, or toddy, made from the fermented juice of the palm, has been almost entirely superseded by the rum which European traffic has introduced; but the natives of Malabar and of the Indian Archipelago are also well acquainted with the properties of toddy, while the Mexican knows how to derive an intoxicating spirit from the juice of the agave, the Tartar from milk, and the Chinese from tea itself. Date-brandy, as well as the inferior arrack from rice, is largely manufactured in Egypt; and the so-called wine of Southern China, of which frequent mention is made by the poets of the Flowery Land, is, in reality, the colourless rice-arrack. The intoxication produced by drinking an infusion of Indian hemp, like that occasioned by opium, or by the chewed leaves of the cacao-tree, belongs to a different class from that due to alcohol.

The Greek wines, so much affected by King James the First, have never gained a high share of favour in our own markets. They have merits of their own, are strong and full-bodied, and, with age, decidedly improve. They are rudely and carelessly made—a fault which they share with the wines of Italy, Portugal, and the Cape of Good Hope, and that they have a taste of resin is an old imputation against them. Cyprus wine, which the Templars first, and afterwards the Venetians, introduced into Europe, is extraordinarily rich in tannin, and would doubtless prove valuable as a tonic; but the later Athenians preferred Syracusan wine to the produce of their own Greek isles. It is probable that the grape culture of Chios and Samos is less skilfully conducted to-day than it was in the time of Anacreon.

If the wines of Greece are taxed with possessing a resinous flavour, those of Italy are accused of leaving an earthy taste upon the palate. They, too, have a considerable amount of strength, and although ill-made, and not always easy to preserve, there are some five or six Italian vintages which survive to explain to us the high value which Goth, Lombard, and Roman set upon the dark Falernian grape-juice. Hungary, from the southernmost spurs of the Carpathians, sends us wines of a rare strength and flavour—Magyar sherries, Slavonian clarets, and a bevy of ruby growths that simulate Burgundy. No sort of crop is so dependent on conditions of soil and climate, and especially the former, as wine. There must be disintegrated limestone to produce an abundance of what the Hellenes styled the life-blood of Bacchus. A white, dazzling, stony patch of earth, whether in Spain, Germany, or France, gives us the rarest vintages. Amontillado, Jurançon, Steinwein, and Metternich Johannisberg, are grown on glaring, pebbly soils, whereon it might be thought that a goat could scarcely find pasturage.

Curious changes in the wine trade have occurred since those old days of Coronation festivals when gutter and fountain ran purple with red Rochelle or violet Gascon, poured forth with lavish liberality for the slaking of the popular thirst. No one then dreamed that Hamburg would act as a sort of middleman between Spain and England, or that the inferior sherries of Spain would pass a season of probation on the banks of the Elbe.

As the culture of the English grape dwindled away, and commercial relations widened, England became the best customer of the wine-growers of the Rhine, of Andalusia, and of France. It would perhaps be more correct to say, of the English possessions in France; for Bordeaux, the chief sea-port of the king of England's extensive French domains, drove a mighty trade with London and Bristol, centuries before her clarets were known, even by name, to the subjects of the king of France. It is but a hundred years since the delicate growths of the Garonne became fashionable among the Parisians. The old monarchs, and courtiers, and great nobles of France drank Burgundy. Frenchmen of a lower rank quaffed the thin wines of their northern provinces, or the sweet white juice of Touraine grapes. Champagne itself owes its court favour to the personal preference of Louis the Fourteenth.

Sherry, although formerly sold in England and Scotland at sixpence a quart, then at ninepence and a shilling, could never have been, relatively speaking, a cheap wine. The Andalusians grow it expressly for sale to the foreigner. It is as complete a mistake to imagine that ordinary Spaniards drink sherry, as it is to picture the Neapolitan as nourished solely on macaroni. Of red, pinkish-yellow, and amber-coloured wines, Spain has abundance, and some of these are very strong and fairly palatable, while all are cheap, with the single exception of the one wine that is in demand abroad. The fact is notorious that a bottle of pure sherry, of fair quality and reasonable age, costs considerably more in Cadiz than it is supposed to sell for, according to the alluring price-list of some enterprising wine merchant, in London. It is a natural inference that a great deal of the nominal sherry consumed among us is very remotely connected with that famous district of vineyards, of which Zeres la Frontera is the capital.

Purely political causes have more than once influenced the bibulous habits of a nation. The Merry Monarch preferred French wine to the sack and malmsey of his predecessors; while the Methuen treaty, which virtually bound over the upper and middle classes of Britons to imbibe port-wine, may be justly described as a diplomatic understanding for the encouragement of gout. At a much later epoch an opposite fashion set in, and Madeira, the chosen nectar of the Prince Regent, threatened completely to supplant the ruby grape-juice—which is half elderberry—from Portugal. Accident, in one case at least, has played an important part in fixing the public taste, since the bitter beer of Burton-on-Trent was at first, for medicinal purposes, brewed wholly for Indian consumption, and the wreck of a vessel outward bound with ale, and the sale by auction of her cargo of pleasant bitterness, brought about the introduction of what is now styled British champagne, to home-staying drinkers.

Ale, as compared with beer, can boast of a venerable antiquity. The latter is rhymingly recorded as having been introduced among us, along with the American turkey, and the carp from China, in the earlier of the Tudor reigns. Hops had no kindly reception from the prejudiced legislature of the period. If Acts of Parliament could have prevented the innovation, the tall stems and graceful tendrils of the hop-plant would never have been a distinguishing feature of Kentish or Worcestershire scenery, nor would any brewer have presumed to mingle the infusion of this intrusive creeper with the honest malt, from which alone had the nutty ale of our remote progenitors been made. But hops triumphed, and one more illustration was added to the truth, that laws which directly clash with the public convenience will remain a dead letter.

It was not until the latter end of the stirring sixteenth century that ardent spirits became plentiful and cheap in Europe, or that dram-drinking grew into a fashion. The hot and rebellious liquors of which Shakespeare speaks in terms of reprobation, probably implied the spirit flavoured with juniper berries, and which the French named genièvre; while on our side of the Channel it was called at first Geneva—perhaps through a mistaken impression that its birthplace was at the outlet of Lake Leman—and afterwards gin. This cordial was then, as now, largely manufactured in the Low Countries, and it was by soldiers, fresh from the Flanders wars, that it was first brought into repute among us. Brandy, which is, or ought to be, a distillation from wines, whereas gin derives its parentage from oats or potatoes, followed next; and then, some cunning chemist having converted the molasses of the West Indian sugar-cane into an intoxicating draught, the rum of the West, and the whisky of the North, put in their respective claims to public favour.

It is useless, where doctors disagree, to touch upon the hotly-contested question as to whether alcohol is, or is not, a species of food. But no one would dispute the fact that it possesses a remarkable power of substituting itself for solid, wholesome aliments, at least for a time. A good slave—as fire is—it becomes, like fire, a cruelly hard master. The amount of food which a man, not stinted by penury or discipline, consumes, may be taken in almost an inverse ratio to his consumption of alcohol. In Sweden, Norway, Russia, and other countries where, by the bulk of the population, cold—intense, long-continued cold—must be faced on a spare diet, corn-brandy is regarded as a necessary of life, hardly second to bread itself. Nay, the hardy peasant of the Danish Aggerfiord, whose staple consists of the eels caught in the long salt-water canal, complains that it is a sin and a shame that good corn, capable of being malted and made into brandy, should take the prosaic shape of bread.

In wine-growing countries, such as Bavaria, France south of the Loire, Spain, and North Hungary, the half-fed day labourers would be sadly ill off, if with their black or brown bread, their chestnuts, pulse, and apples, they did not receive a lavish ration of wine. In these districts the farmers find it worth their while to be liberal as regards grape-juice. They find their crimson vats brimming with wine which cannot always be preserved without turning into sorry vinegar, which is worth from a halfpenny to a penny a quart on the spot, and yet which their working men willingly accept in lieu of better food. From two to three litres of new red wine a day, largely increased in harvest time, forms the habitual allowance of many a South of France labouring man, who yet is ordinarily sober, and to whom the flavours of tea and coffee are quite unknown.

Tea and coffee made their modest first appearance in this island, before our Continental neighbours had tasted the fragrance of the Mocha berry, or inhaled the aroma of the Chinese leaf. Next to ourselves, the Dutch are the chief European consumers of tea; and after the Dutch, in this respect, come the Russians. Tea, in becoming cheap, has sensibly deteriorated in quality; and, indeed, the rarer varieties were always estimated, among the Chinese themselves, at prices which to us would appear fabulous or fantastic. It may be added that the colourless "Mandarin" leaf, which is weighed out with trembling care, as though it were gold-dust, would not please the majority of barbarian buyers. Belgium is the great coffee-drinking country of the West, as Morocco is the one African kingdom where tea is in demand. In France, also, coffee is held in almost superstitious reverence for its powers as a stimulant. Much was said by newspaper correspondents, during the late war of 1870-71, of that luckless soup which the ill-starred Gauls were usually concocting or eating, when surprised by the active advance of their solidly-fed enemies; but it is less generally known that the French soldier, on a campaign, regards his early ration of black coffee as much as a necessity of life as he does the loaf of ammunition-bread that he straps to his knapsack, and that officers of rank have been known to pronounce it "the life of the army."

Broadly speaking, the Western Mohammedan nations adhere to coffee, while the extreme East—including not merely China, but Japan, Thibet, and Tartary—remains faithful to tea. Chocolate is the drink of Central, and cocoa of Southern America. The Polish peasant—whose climate does not lend itself to wine growing, as do those of his neighbours of Hungary and Wallachia, and who has not the Russian moujik's liking for brick-tea, or for the sour beer called quass—is scarcely cognisant of any beverage save fiery corn-brandy. The consumption of beer throughout the Flemish-speaking provinces of Belgium is very great; but so soon as we mingle with a race whose language is the Walloon dialect of old French, we find that beer gives place to gin. The cider-drinking districts of Normandy and Brittany are surrounded by a belt of country in which the people set small store by the apple-wine, so dear to the dwellers on the coast.

In spite of the very considerable yield of French, German, and Italian vineyards, there are undeniably more beer-drinkers on the continent of Europe than consumers of wine. The merits of the beverage vary much more than seems to warrant the degree of favour with which it is regarded. Thus, the beer of Belgium—which, with the one exception of the so-called barley beer, is brewed from wheat of inferior quality, from oats and rye—is neither very palatable nor very wholesome; while it may confidently be pronounced that throughout the south, at least, of Germany, all beer is excellent in quality, those of Vienna and of Munich deservedly taking the highest rank. Even in Italy, the beer of Milan competes, not unsuccessfully, with the wine of the Tuscan valleys and the Lombard plains; and Spain and Portugal, perhaps the most sober of European countries, are the only ones in which malt finds no patrons. Our own empire in India may, in a measure, be said to be founded on beer, since the most stringent economist would scarcely propose to suppress the heavy annual outlay for that bitter ale without which the health of European troops stationed there could not be preserved.

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

SIR JOHN HAWKWOOD.

In pure weariness of spirit the student of adventurous life turns aside from the quest of the heroic adventurer. There is, of course, the imaginary "Knight" of story; there is the mediæval Alexander, so curiously Christianised and reclothed, that the pagan Alexander would not know himself again; there are the Seven Champions of Christendom; and any number of the Vikingr, more popular, just now, to readers of Norse Sagas than, of old, with the unhappy inhabitants of the Eastern Counties. Good soldiers, and tall fellows those, all of them—on paper at least—thorough, whole-souled, staunch to the backbone. The morals of King Arthur's knights were hardly so good as they might have been; but, like Charlemagne's Paladins, the men were brave enough—courteous and chivalrous—on paper. It is unfortunate, that the reputations of persons who enjoyed the advantage of living during the ages of chivalry, bear an unfortunate resemblance to photographic portraits. When very minute in size, they look well enough, but when we "enlarge" these cartes de visite, all the lumps, and pimples, and ugly features come out with hideous distinctness, as if the seamy side of nature were turned out. Viewed by the light of contemporary history, the chivalrous colour fades away entirely. When Burke said that the age of chivalry had passed, did he not make a mistake in supposing that it had ever existed?

After mature deliberation, I am compelled, much to my sorrow, to give up the age of chivalry altogether, as a purely imaginary period. The time when all the men were brave, and all the women fair, bears an unfortunate likeness to that mythical golden age, when the lion lay down with the lamb. It is for ever retreating, and eludes the grasp with curious persistence. In the good old-fashioned times there were dutiful sons, home-keeping daughters, careful wives, faithful retainers, honest tradesmen, prudent merchants, patriot kings, and loyal people. The tradition is almost universal, and if general belief is admissible as evidence, there must have been good old times and glorious days of chivalry at some date or other. The only difficulty is to fix this provoking date. What do our own excellent parents and most venerable grandparents mean when they speak of Good Old-fashioned ways, servants, beer, port-wine, dinners, and the rest of it? Do they mean the days of George the Fourth, when, following royal example, people ate four times (they only now eat twice) as much as was good for them, and drank without regard to consequences; beat the "Charlies," and rolled in the gutter in a good old-fashioned way; when servants dunned guests for vails, and stole whole hecatombs of birds, beasts, and fishes as their perquisites; when heavy ale was followed by loaded port-wine, which, again, was not unfrequently supplemented by "rack" punch; when ladies wore "toilettes diaphanes," and caused their semi-transparent clothing to be damped before they put it on, in order that it might cling the closer to the figure; when gentlemen swore freely; "went out" on the most frivolous pretences with equal freedom, and shot each other dead in the morning, because they had been drunk overnight? These could hardly have been the good old times any more than those which stirred the bile of Junius and pointed the pen of Churchill. Were the venal times of the earlier Georges particularly good? I doubt it. Were people particularly good, and honest, and true during the life of her proverbially-defunct majesty Queen Anne? Did not the ingenious Mr. Joseph Addison draw his famous Sir Roger de Coverley as the type of the old-fashioned squire? The good man of fiction is old—one who retains antique virtues. The young or middle-aged man is drawn very differently.

Bit by bit the golden age crumbles away. It hardly existed under the Merry Monarch, and could barely be imagined under Cromwell. The age of chivalry will bear no closer inspection. To-day we are told that gentlemen were more polished in their intercourse, when the slightest breach of politeness might occasion a hostile meeting; the gentlemen of the Regency, who shot each other on Wimbledon-common or on Wormwood-scrubbs, had mentors who despaired of instilling into them the high-bred elegance of the ancien régime; the dukes and marquises, in high red heels, deplored the degeneracy of the times, and yearned for the right of private war. Thus we hark back and ever back, through sanguinary annals, without finding the days of chivalry. On the contrary, we find the times, when looked at closely, less and less chivalrous. No man scrupled to take a mean advantage of his foe, either during our Wars of the Roses, or the long series of troubles which make up French history. Breach of faith was the rule. When the Red Comyn was made "sicker" by the dagger of Kirkpatrick, he was slain in violation of a solemn compact, wherein whatever of faith and honour appertained to the contracting parties was involved; when John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, was chopped down on the Pont de Montereau by Tanneguy du Châtel, the murder was done before the face of the Dauphin himself; when Don Enrique, of Castile, took his rival, Don Pedro, prisoner, he nobly finished him off—an unarmed man—with his dagger. These latter instances occurred in the actual age of chivalry, if ever such a period existed. There was much talk of chivalry during the reign of our Plantagenet kings, but, so far as can be ascertained, no man ever gave his adversary a chance if he could help it; while respect for the fair sex expended itself mainly in ballads and virelays, and was never allowed to hinder a single man from abducting a wife, or a husband from murdering or imprisoning her. It will be recollected, in this connection, that the Queen of Song and Love, and the rest of it, the founder of the Courts of Love in gay Guienne, was held in strict durance by dire Henry of Anjou. It must be granted that men and women, too, in the so-called days of chivalry, were brave; but the courage of the heavily-armed barons was accompanied by so much jealousy and arrogance, as occasionally to render a feudal army rather an incumbrance to the monarch—who, by a figure of speech, was supposed to command it—than an actual engine of offence against the enemy. Questions of precedence in council and in the field sorely embarrassed the commander, who, instead of focussing his mind on the task of beating the enemy, was compelled to distribute it over the far more complex problem of so setting his own squadrons in the field, that they should not then and there fall to and massacre each other! A beautiful instance of the heartburnings between the great nobles of the day occurred at the battle of Nicopolis. The French had sent a strong contingent to the Crusade, led by the king of Hungary. Seven hundred great lords and gentlemen dressed "like kings," led by John the Fearless before mentioned, made a gallant show on the day of battle, but were irritated by the command of the king of Hungary to wait in position, till the main body of the army came up. Some deliberation took place, and ultimately the Marshal d'Eu insisted on making an immediate attack, for he was wroth that the Lord de Courcy's opinion had been asked before his own. Rash counsels prevailed; the French contingent was cut to pieces, only a few grandees being preserved for ransom, and the battle was lost.

In almost every great battle of the time the herd of nobles was found equally unmanageable. The clear-headed Henries and Edwards, who reigned over England, Normandy, Anjou, and Aquitaine, were the first to perceive the advantage of regular troops who fought for pay and plunder, and would, so long as their pay was not unreasonably in arrear, obey their employer implicitly, except during the sack of a town; and it is worthy of note that their policy was marked by extraordinary success. Without denying the warlike talent of Edward the Third and of Edward the Black Prince, we may yet assign the proper meed of praise to their administrative genius, which supplied them with compact bodies of mercenary soldiers on whom they could thoroughly depend, while the French armies consisted of a rabble of nobles, quarrelling among themselves, and followed to the field by their unwilling and unskilful villeins. At a later date than Poitiers, the French, Italians, and Spaniards employed mercenaries more or less largely; but I am not far wrong in calling Edward the Black Prince emphatically the Prince of Condottieri, as he himself fought for pay in Spain. The second great figure of this kind is Bertrand du Guesclin. Still, neither of these prominent personages could exactly be classed as an adventurer, and I am therefore inclined to pitch upon Sir John Hawkwood as the type of the freelance. It is true that the difference between amateur and professional soldiers is less easy to draw, at a time when fighting was a general amusement, than it would be now, but it is not less certain that the professional mostly got the better of the amateur, when the two classes were opposed. The amateur fighting baron individually was, perhaps, a finer fellow than the condottiere, but, in the management of masses of troops and the conduct of siege operations, was a mere tyro by the side of men who had done nothing else from their youth upward.

How completely the lives of the professionals were passed in war may be gathered from the significant fact, that upon the conclusion of peace between the English and French, by the treaty of Bretigni, in 1360, loud complaints were heard from them that it was all very well for kings and princes to make peace, but what was to become of the freelances? A pretty business indeed, all this signing, and sealing, and clerks' work generally; but how about the gallant soldiers who, in tens of thousands, had been fighting for somebody since they could lay lance in rest? Was their pay to be stopped? Were their castles, won at their swords' point, to be taken from them? Was their privilege of burning and destroying somebody's property in somebody's quarrel to come to an end? A fine state of things surely, a shutting up of shop, as it were, in the fighting business, a taking down of the sign, and a turning of swords into ploughshares with a vengeance! Perish the thought! If the kings of France and England had made a truce, and the king of Navarre had a right to make war, so had any other gentleman, as the famous Captal de Buch, for instance, who kept his hand in by "carrying on the war on his own account at Clermont de Beauvoisis." Many other valiant captains—Germans, Scots, English, and Flemings—were of like thinking with the Captal de Buch, and, having met together, determined to join their forces and also "make war on their own account." Sir Seguin de Batefol, Guyot du Pin, and the small but brave Mechin, collected their forces in Burgundy and Champagne, took the fort of Joinville, and, under the name of Late Comers, sacked wealthy cities and laid the country waste "on their own account." King John of France was sorely discomfited at finding that his country was still enduring all the real horrors of war, and sent his cousin, James de Bourbon, to demolish the freebooters. This gallant noble raised an army, and at last came upon the five companies near the Castle of Brignais, some three leagues from Lyons. The companions mustered some sixteen thousand strong. The number of the king's troops is not known. In this case it would be awkward to use the terms "regular" and "irregular." In fact, the insurgent companies were the regular troops—the trained soldiers—and the army of James de Bourbon raw levies. The companies played, according to Froissart, a "grand trick." They encamped upon a low flat-topped hill, which concealed their numbers, and rendered attack difficult. The French attacked them bravely enough, but were overwhelmed with showers of flints and great stones, and in the midst of their confusion the "grand battalion" of the companies, "fresh and untouched, advanced by a secret road round the hill, and being in close order like a brush, with their lances cut down to six feet or thereabouts, with loud cries and a thorough good will fell upon the French army." The result was no longer doubtful, the amateurs were beaten by the professional warriors, and routed with immense slaughter, James de Bourbon and his son being both mortally wounded. Terror seized upon the country, the freebooters sacked and ruined entire provinces, and because they were in such large bodies that no small extent of country could maintain them, they divided themselves into two parties. The smaller of these remained at Ance, under the command of Sir Seguin de Batefol, who, after acquiring immense riches, was bought off and retired into Gascony, coming at last to a bad end, for Charles the Bad, king of Navarre, asked him to dinner, and proposed that he should make fresh disturbances in France, contrary to the solemn covenants entered into by him. The conscience of the freebooter did not stand in his way. He was quite willing to fight for the king of Navarre, but asked for an immense sum of money. Charles the Bad objected to the price, but still more to letting his secret go in the keeping of a freelance, and so handed him a dish of poisoned oranges, which closed his account for ever.

Meanwhile, the larger band of free companions harried the country right and left, surprised and conquered the town of St. Esprit, and threatened Avignon itself, where they would have had the pope and cardinals at their mercy. Pope Innocent the Sixth and the College published a crusade against them, absolution was granted to all who would take up arms against them, and the Cardinal d'Arras was elected chief of the crusade. This reverend prelate went to work oddly, for "he retained all soldiers, and others, who were desirous of saving their souls, and of gaining the aforesaid pardons, but he would not give them any pay, which caused many of them to depart and go into Lombardy; others returned to their own countries, and some joined these wicked companies, which were daily increasing." Prowess and piety having completely broken down, it was finally determined to try hard cash. The Marquis of Montferrat agreed for a sum of money to clear the territory of the Pope from the freelances, and arranged with their captains to march under his command into Lombardy, for high future pay, pardon, and absolution from all crimes and sin, and sixty thousand florins in ready money.

Prominent among these captains was Sir John Hawkwood, an Essex man, and a native of Sible Hedingham, where a monument to him is still to be found. He is said to have been the son of a tanner, and originally apprenticed to a tailor, but the existence of a manor of Hawkwood, since the time of King John, throws some doubt on the humbleness of his origin. Whatever the condition of his parents may have been, he served in the ranks as a common soldier, and comported himself so valiantly in the wars waged against France by our Edward the Third, that he was soon promoted to the rank of captain, and, for further good service, had the honour of knighthood conferred upon him, though he was "accounted the poorest knight in the army." His general, Edward the Black Prince, highly esteemed him for his valour and conduct, of which he gave extraordinary proofs at the battle of Poitiers.

Under the Marquis of Montferrat the companies entered Italy, where they soon made their mark. One Italian historian speaks of Hawkwood as Giovanni della Guglia—John of the Needle; but he is more frequently spoken of as Giovanni Aucud, Kauchovod, or Aguto—all three desperate struggles of the smooth Italian tongue to pronounce his English name. Hawkwood's Englishmen, the white company as they were called, proved too costly for the Marquis of Montferrat to keep after they had served his turn; but this mattered little to Hawkwood, who, with three thousand men well trained, mounted, and armed, entered the service of Pisa. As it would occupy several entire numbers of ALL THE YEAR ROUND to give the faintest sketch of the state of Italy in the latter half of the fourteenth century, I will refrain from saying more than that Galeazzo and Bernabo Visconti ruled Milan and Genoa, and were generally at war with somebody; that the Florentines and Pisans were fighting as usual, with occasional intervals of truce; that there were popes and anti-popes, popes at Avignon and popes at Rome, hating each other like poison; Italy being altogether in that curious state of ebullition called the Renaissance, when, amid intestine broils and petty ambitions, that wonderful country made a mark in poetry and in prose, in architecture and in sculpture, in painting and in science, that time can never wash away. In the employ of the Pisans, Hawkwood greatly distinguished himself, but when they made it up with the Florentines and dismissed him, he settled down in the territory of Siena, again "on his own account," and ravaged the country so frightfully that the Italians compared his troops to the plague of locusts, which, in the beginning of the same year, 1364, desolated Italy. Living thus at freequarters as best he could, "Aguto"—now a name of terror—went on burning and plundering till 1369, when he returned to regular business by entering the service of Bernabo Visconti, and (after fighting for him for some time) that of the Pope, who required him to make war against his late master. It is said that Visconti behaved shabbily in reducing pay and allowances, and had, besides, enraged the great captain, by allowing his son Ambrosio to criticise his conduct at the battle of Asti. He thrashed the Milanese soundly and reduced many important cities to the Pope's authority, for which services he was given by Pope Gregory five cities for himself, and was declared gonfalonier of the Church. Shortly afterwards he again sided with the Visconti, and subdued the ecclesiastical states to their authority; but, having some difficulty with Galeazzo Visconti, went over again to the Pope, and gave battle again successively to Galeazzo and to John Galeazzo, inflicting on them two tremendous defeats. The Pope's legate now set Hawkwood to work, to destroy the harvest of the Florentine allies of the Visconti; but that commander, disgusted at the legate's underhand tricks, and being, moreover, bribed by the Florentines, threw up his papal commission. His price on this occasion was seventy-five thousand florins, which, with a fine sense of irony, was levied on the clergy. He, however, did not yet openly enter the service of the republic, but, waiting till the Pope fancied himself secure of his revenge on the Florentines, suddenly swung round to their side, making alliance with Bernabo Visconti and Florence for a year, and bringing with him three thousand "lances" and five thousand archers—probably altogether some twenty thousand men. His pay was a quarter of a million of florins. Bernabo Visconti now determined to fix the fickle one, and to that end gave Hawkwood his natural daughter in marriage, with a portion of a million of florins; but married life does not seem to have weakened "Aguto's" predatory instincts, as we find him soon afterwards overrunning several Italian states, and putting them to ransom. After this Hawkwood and the Florentines had sundry quarrels, but in the main were faithful to each other. After the death of his father-in-law Bernabo, Hawkwood was constantly employed by Florence in checking the growing power of Galeazzo, which threatened to overshadow Italy, and fought many campaigns, in which he seems to have proved somewhat of a Fabius. His usual plan was to lay the enemy's country waste, and, if possible, shut him up in fortified places until this condition of things became unbearable, and he was ready to fight under any disadvantage; but on particular occasions, when confronted by extraordinary difficulties, he showed true military genius. During a memorable retreat the enemy, who fancied they had got him completely hemmed in, sent him a cage with a fox in it as a polite message, to which all the remark vouchsafed by the stolid Briton was, that "the fox would find a way out," as he did by a brilliant manœuvre. Campaign after campaign was conducted by Hawkwood, until, at last, Galeazzo and the rest of the enemies of Florence, wearied out by defeat, delay, and disaster, made peace with the republic. To reduce the expenses of the state, sorely tried during these long wars, the Florentines discharged all their foreign auxiliaries, save only Sir John Hawkwood and one thousand men under his command. But the retirement of the great freelance did not last long. The petty squabbles of the city had no charm for one who loved better to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak, and the old warrior ended his active life on March 6th, 1393, at his house in the street called Pulveroso, near Florence. His funeral was celebrated with great magnificence amid the general lamentation of the people. His bier, adorned with gold and jewels, was supported by the first persons of the republic, followed by horses in gilded trappings, banners, and other military ensigns and a large body of citizens. His remains were deposited in the church of Sta. Reparata, and his equestrian portrait was painted on the dome according to public decree. From such copies and commentaries as have come down to our time we find the great freelance possessed of well-cut features, remarkably resembling those of the Stanley family—clean shaven, of ruddy complexion, with brown eyes and hair. He appears to have been over the middle height, a broad-shouldered, deep-chested, powerfully-built Englishman. Under his portrait in the dome of Sta. Reparata was a Latin inscription to Joannes Acutus, eques Britannicus, &c. &c. &c. Our countryman Skippon translates this John Sharp, a blunder which probably explains the whole story about John-of-the-Needle, the tailor's son, and so forth. Verily those philologists who hold that nothing means anything that it appears to mean, will be pleased with this derivative of John Sharp, a tailor's son, from Sir John Hawkwood, sometime a gentleman adventurer, who made war either for others, or, in default of employment, "on his own account."

SINGING.

Let me count up the songs of life that we
  Have sung together from the first till now:
The simple baby-rhymes of bird and bee,
  Of sun and star, of stream and blossom-bough.
The deeper music of our youth's new song,
  In days when life looked wonderfully fair;
When hearts were daring, pulses quick and strong,
  When woe was not, and joy was everywhere.
The wilder strain of passion, smiles and tears,
  When love awoke with power to slay or save;
The calmer melody of graver years,
  In minor key, like music by a grave.
And now we have another song to learn,
'Tis written for us, we but wait our turn.

I often think this unseen, unsung song,
  With all its strangeness, will have notes we know;
And we shall hear its awful chords among
  The mingled music of our long ago.
The simple snatches of our baby-rhymes;
  The thrilling bars of youth's triumphant strain;
The peals of melody, like wedding chimes,
  That bring our summer love-song back again.
It may be this new song is hard to sing,
  But shall we grudge to learn it, who have grown
Tired and voiceless in earth's carolling,
  Yet fain would have some melody our own?
And though it is the song of death, we know
That singing it, to endless life we go.

THE LITTLE MARE.

A STORY.

She was known far and wide throughout the neighbourhood in which I made her acquaintance as "the little mare." Known familiarly, admired greatly, and in truth I must add, disliked extremely. No man had bestowed a name upon her yet; indeed, no man had owned her long enough, to take the trouble to give her any other than the cognomen which seemed to all who came in contact with her to be sufficiently distinctive for her, beautiful and dangerous as she was.

A little chestnut thoroughbred, fifteen and a half hands high, her almost matchless beauty fired me with the desire to become her owner the minute I saw her. It was all in vain they told me that she had a thoroughly bad reputation as a hair-brained, inefficiently broken, shifty creature. I liked the little mare, and so I bought her, and named her "Guinevere."

At this distance of time there is nothing surely vain-glorious or egotistical in my stating, that in those days I rode with a degree of skill and courage, that made the task I had undertaken of taming Guinevere an interesting study to everybody who either knew me, or understood the mare. She was a perfect picture in all the phases in which she showed herself to the public. Whether she covered the flat in her long-stretching gallop, or flew the stiff break-neck banks and hedges of the country like a bird; whether she "cantered on a sixpence," as it was her graceful wont to do occasionally, or sprung like a wild cat in a spasm of spite in the air, to the detriment of her girths and the danger of my balance very often, she was always perfectly graceful and perfectly in harmony with her reputation and her appearance.

I became conscious, after a while, that the retention of the little mare was a growing monomania with me. She was not suited to the country in which I lived; she was not fitted for the work for which I most frequently wanted her. Her temper was invariably bad in the society of other horses, and in the hunting-field her conduct was execrable. Nevertheless, I clung to the companionship of the only treacherous four-footed fellow-creature I had ever met with, and refused to give ear to those birds of ill-omen who croaked out prophetical cautions to me to "beware that nothing evil came of my obstinacy." I seemed to bear a charmed life as far as she was concerned, for her worst feats of vicious skittishness never caused me the slightest inconvenience in the saddle. As for others, I did not desire that any one else should ride her; and if one were rash enough to do so, that rash one must "'ware the lurking devil in her," that was all.

The little mare had been the dominant interest, or rather I should say the dominant amusement, of my life for about six months, when our monotonous routine was broken up pleasantly by the arrival of an old school-fellow of mine, who came to be my guest for a month before her marriage. We had parted as girls eight years before, when I married and went to live down in the country. But as we had kept up a tolerably regular and frequent correspondence ever since, and as I had honestly laid bare to her several phases of feeling, and changes of temperament and judgment, through which I had passed, I imagined that I knew Laura Baysfield as well, and understood her as thoroughly, as of old.

She had changed considerably in appearance, I decided the first moment that my eyes fell on her. The slight girl had merged into a handsome woman. "Yes, handsome," I repeated advisedly, when my husband disputed the term, and cavilled at her claim to good looks. "Yes, handsome unquestionably, Kirke. Not beautiful, not pretty, not lovely; not one of those terms can be applied to her; but Laura is handsome."

"She's a great, coarse, loud, horse-godmother of a woman, and I can't understand your enthusiastic friendship for her, any more than I can understand any fellow who can avoid the match involving himself in marriage with her; that laugh of hers would justify a breach of promise on the part of any man," Kirke went on contesting, and, after the manner of a politic wife, I put the question by for a time, feeling convinced that the charm of Laura's candour would assert itself over him sooner or later.

But the conviction grew upon me, after a few days, that my friend's candour, complete as it was, was oftentimes apt to degenerate into the most cruel rudeness to anyone whom she did not like, or from whom she had no prospect of deriving any benefit. From light sparring, the conversation between my husband and my friend would frequently take the turn of angry recrimination. "She has been accustomed to be flattered on in her fault-finding with everyone's manners and customs but her own, by being told that her tongue is as bright, polished, and sharp as a rapier of the best Milan steel," I said.

"Mendacious humbug!" my husband laughed; "no one but herself ever said that of her tongue; there's a good deal of bluntness about it, that's only just saved from being brutal by the fact of her being a lady. No, no, Nellie; your friend is a failure, and you'll find her out to be so in time, if I am not very much mistaken."

"Nonsense, Kirke; all possibility of our ever clashing is over now, even if it could ever have existed. I'm married, and she's engaged to a man who, if report is to be credited, is as near perfection as it's possible for an accomplished man of the world to be. He's coming to see her to-morrow, you know that, don't you?"

"No; she either thought the fact or her host unimportant, for she has forgotten to mention the one to the other," Kirke replied; and I forebore to say anything more about Laura.

The following day Major Barton came, bringing with him one of his brother officers, a Captain Meredith; and as I saw Laura's glance fall on the latter, I felt, at once, a presentiment that Barton had acted indiscreetly in bringing his friend.

The two men reached our house early in the morning. They had run down from Aldershot by the night-train and slept at the station, therefore they came into our midst before we were prepared for them—before we had shaken off the sultry summer morning lassitude, or mastered the contents of the daily papers, or devised any scheme of entertainment, wherewith to beguile the time of their visit away.

Laura lounged discontentedly into my room about half an hour after their arrival, with a pout on her face that I was beginning to understand.

"What do you propose, Nellie?" she began. "We must do something to amuse them."

"You had better take Major Barton for a stroll under the cliffs, and I'll come and talk to Captain Meredith;" but, though I thus unhesitatingly disposed of what I saw she was inclined to treat as a difficulty, I felt confident that she would not be enthusiastic about the arrangement.

"Thank you; but as I shall very soon have the opportunity of strolling uninterruptedly through life with Major Barton, I won't begin already. Why can't we all go for a ride?"

"There are five of us to go, and we have only three horses," I replied.

"Three horses and a pony; you forget the pony."

"Oh! Laura, you wouldn't suggest putting one of those plungers on the Kelpie," I laughed. "Poor little fellow, he's blind and lame, and their legs would trail on the ground. It's impossible for either of them to ride the Kelpie."

"Impossible for either of them, or for me, because I am too tall," Miss Laura rejoined coolly; "but you might ride the Kelpie, and lend the little mare to me. And as for Kirke, I'm sure he won't care to go."

"You're civil to me and to my husband," I said, trying to keep down both my temper and my colour. "I daresay you are right about Kirke not caring to go with us, but you're utterly wrong in supposing that I can lend you the little mare. I wouldn't let a woman, who rode perfectly, mount Guinevere if I could help it, and, clever as you are in most things, Laura, you haven't attained perfection as a horsewoman as yet. Guinevere would buck you off in a moment."

"Then let Meredith ride her," she urged eagerly. "Do, Nellie; do be sweet, as you always are; I've promised him a ride. I've promised, do you see; you wouldn't have me break my word? If there's any difficulty about the horses, can't you stay at home with Fred Barton, and let me go out with Captain Meredith?"

"I can't do anything so utterly insane," I said, angrily. "Why do you want to annoy Major Barton, by preferring his friend before us strangers? You saw Captain Meredith for the first time half an hour ago, and you want to behave as if he were the man you were going to marry, and Major Barton were the stranger——"

"I behave as if he were the man I wanted to marry, I allow that," Laura answered, defiantly. "Don't begin to preach at me, Nellie; it's a case of love at first sight. I'd give half my life to feel sure that Meredith would marry me, if I broke my engagement with Fred."

"You're mad, and you're wicked," I began.

"Mad, bad, and dangerous to know," she interrupted; "yes, you're right. The majority of women would hold their tongues about it if they felt as I do. Oh! Nelly, let me have this ride; do let me have this ride, she went on, so mournfully that my heart softened towards her, to the degree of making me utter a sentimentally conventional sentence.

"What a pity it is that our wayward hearts are not under better control!"

"Not at all," Laura retorted. "There's quite as much joy as there is woe in these dominating, ungovernable emotions. I will gladly bear all the pain my 'wayward heart' can inflict upon me for the sake of the poetry its 'uncontrollable emotion' has infused into my life to-day."

According to my cooler judgment, there was something unwomanly, both in the violence of the sentiment and the suddenness with which it had been inspired. But to attempt to argue with Laura was about as impotent a proceeding as running one's head against a stone wall, with the idea of impressing the wall.

I made the concession eventually; made it with great reluctance, certainly, and to salve my conscience I hampered it with conditions.

"We will go for the ride, if you promise me that you will not try to divide the party. We must all four keep together, and the conversation must be general. If you attempt to effect a tête-à-tête with Captain Meredith, I shall insist on coming home at once, and I shall ask him to ride by the Kelpie's side."

"I'll promise anything you ask," she said, as she went off to put on her habit, while I rang to order the horses.

In spite of her impatience to start, the facility of custom enabled me to be ready some time before she was, and I made the most of the opportunity by running down to give some general directions as to the conduct of our ride to the two gentlemen, and some special hints as to Guinevere's proclivities to Captain Meredith.

"Your mare is a great beauty, my friend Miss Baysfield tells me, and I am a highly honoured man in being permitted to ride her," the latter said to me, as Major Barton walked out of the room to shout out a request to Laura to "hurry herself."

"A great beauty; and I'm afraid some people would tell you truly enough—a great beast," I replied quickly. "Strong pressure has been put upon me to-day to induce me to let you have her, Captain Meredith. You would help me out of a great difficulty if you would refuse to ride her."

He was a cool-mannered, good-looking, lazy-voiced man, this one whom I addressed, with the air upon him habitually of taking little interest in or heed of anything. He surprised me now by the change which he permitted my few, unimportant words to make in him. An uncontrollable agitation became apparent both in his voice and manner as he answered:

"Let me entreat you, Mrs. Vyner, not to put a stop to the project. It may be—it will be—the only opportunity I shall have of——"

He paused, and I struck in, intemperately: "Of doing what? Of behaving dishonourably and cruelly to Major Barton?"

He made a gesture of deprecation or of despair, I could scarcely decide which it was, and repeated the words—"Let me entreat you not to put a stop to the project."

"Your seriousness makes me surer than I was before that I ought to put a stop to it, or to tell Major Barton to do so."

"That would be the most fatal step you could take, believe me," he said earnestly. "It would be giving importance to an unimportant, though most inexplicable, caprice. It is Miss Baysfield's whim that I should ride with her to-day, and, though I have no desire to do so, and have only known her an hour, I can't resist her will. I shall ride with her even if——"

"You ride to destruction," I put in impatiently. "Can't you, man of the world as you are, see that this is only a capricious outbreak of a desire to show power on the part of a mere flirt? Laura is my friend, but, for the sake of you all, I ask you to help me to stop mischief."

"You might as well appeal to me to help you to stop an avalanche," he replied recklessly. "As you unluckily have horses enough for us all to ride——"

"But—I haven't enough," I urged. "I am compelled to ride a horrible little pony just to gratify Laura's ridiculous vanity. Rather than not carry her point, she actually had the absurdity to propose riding Guinevere herself, although even her self-conceit must be conscious that her powers are wholly inadequate to such a task."

"Is Guinevere so difficult?"

"She's more, Captain Meredith; she's dreadfully dangerous to anyone who knows her a shade less than I do——"

"Captain Meredith is one of the finest rough-riders in the Service," Laura struck in, in a loud voice, advancing into the room with Major Barton by her side.

There was something almost painfully sharp to me, at this moment, in the contrast presented by the devoted, refined man with the distinguished, soldierly bearing, and the pronounced manner of my friend—the woman he had chosen for his wife.

"He may be the first rough-rider in the world, and still he had better not ride Guinevere, I feel sure," I muttered to Laura. "Do give up the plan, dear; do let us stay at home, and spend the time as I proposed."

I spoke in so low a voice, that the others could not hear what I said; and Laura, in obedience to my hint, answered me, softly:

"It's no use, Nellie. Come, order the horses round, and let us start."

She glowed with impatience as she spoke, and I, with a degree of supineness with which I have never failed to reproach myself, withdrew my opposition to the scheme, and ordered the horses round as she desired.

By a bold strategic movement, which she executed as we rode down our rather steep drive, Laura placed herself by Captain Meredith's side, behind her lover and me. I felt that such an open mark of her preference for the stranger must be both painful and humiliating to Major Barton; and my pity for him deepened my feeling of indignation against her, for her thoughtless persistence in amusing herself at any cost of suffering and annoyance to others.

"Let us pull up for Laura and your friend to join us," I said, as we passed through the gateway into the road, and I half drew rein as I spoke.

"Pray do nothing of the kind, Mrs. Vyner," he said, quickly. "Laura is at perfect liberty to do as she pleases in this as in every other matter. I can trust her."

"But I can't trust Guinevere," I urged. "Do let us keep together: the little mare's going like a lamb now; but I should like to see that Captain Meredith understands her desperately deceitful nature."

"He is a first-rate fellow in the saddle," Major Barton answered decidedly. "Don't show any anxiety about them; they will both put it down to another cause than the little mare if you do. Let us trot on."

I obeyed him—unwillingly enough—for two or three reasons. The Kelpie's trot was anything but the poetry of motion for one thing; and I felt that we were both disregarding our bounden duty, which was to look after the reckless pair behind us, for another. My doubts and distress rendered me taciturn, and presently Major Barton, looking at me, read me like an open book.

"Don't be annoyed about anything," he said, cordially. "Laura is subject to these glamours, but they're of the most transient nature in the world, I assure you. I quite understand her; don't be annoyed."

"I'm sorry you should suppose that I am at all inclined to censure Laura for anything she may do or leave undone," I replied, eagerly. "I am 'uncomfortable,' not 'annoyed;' I can't shake off the impression of impending evil."

He glanced down at me as the Kelpie shuffled along in his limping trot, with an air of grave sympathy and toleration.

"I am glad that Laura has come to such a good, honest friend as you are, for her last few weeks of freedom," he said, kindly. "She has been brought up in a bad school, Mrs. Vyner. To crave for the admiration of every man she meets, and to compass her ends by any means within her powers, has been her motive and her occupation for some years; but I look forward with confidence to her relinquishing that low aim, and embracing a loftier one, when she comes under a better influence——"

"Do let us pull up," I interrupted, pleadingly. My side was aching horribly, for the Kelpie had a trot to which no mortal rider could adjust him or herself. We had ridden a good distance from home by this time, and had left the other two far behind us, and my desire to call a halt culminated now, when I found that we were in a network of high-hedged lanes, in which it would be the easiest thing possible for Laura and her cavalier to lose themselves, for just exactly so long as they pleased.

I can recall vividly every turn and involution of that narrow lane, every patch of light and shade that fell upon the fern-clothed banks and flower-crowned hedges. A little rivulet, merely a silver thread of water, trickled along at the base of either bank, and at the end of the lane a thick wood loomed, offering us the grateful prospect of shade and coolness.

There were two or three bridle-paths through this wood, and acting under the influence of the fear that Major Barton and I might take one, and the contumacious pair behind us another, I insisted on coming to a halt at the entrance, until the laggards rode up and joined us.

There was no mistaking the expression of their faces as they approached us. His eyes were bent on her with a look of intense, passionate admiration. An eager, reckless look it was, and I turned with anger and alarm to see how she met it! Her always pale face was like a white fire now, and her lids drooped heavily over her eyes, in vain attempt to veil from us, who were regarding her, the secret of the triumph she had won over a man's heart and honour.

More with a view of reminding them of our presence than for any other reason, I called out, coldly, as they came up:

"You're handling the little mare's mouth very badly, Captain Meredith. I never take her on the curb. Just see how bloodshot her eyes are? You have put her in a passion."

They neither of them spoke, and I saw with unfeigned alarm that Major Barton was taking keen cognisance of their abstraction.

"I'm nervous," I said, in an explanatory tone to him. "It always upsets me if I see Guinevere mismanaged in the slightest degree."

"And two Guineveres at the same time must tax any man's powers of management," he said, in a low voice; but low as the tones were, they pierced my heart, by the power of the pain that was in them, and I trembled for the natural consequences of this folly, as I realised that Major Barton was assigning the parts of the King, Queen, and false Knight to himself, Laura, and Meredith.

As we "rode on through sun and shade," the crisp, rapidly-bronzing ferns cracking under our horses' feet, and sending up waves of natural incense around us, there could be no doubt of the beauty of the picture of which we formed a part. "The green trees whispering low and mild;" the blue unclouded weather; the fine forms and soldierly bearing of the two men; the large, lazy beauty of the fair woman, who was the Eve and Serpent of this Paradise in one; the sinuous, subtle grace of the fascinatingly ill-tempered little mare; and even the picturesque ruggedness of the Kelpie—all these parts, perfect in themselves, were harmonised into a whole that was more perfect still.

Presently Laura got close to my side, and whispered, "Let us get home as soon as we can, Nellie? I have made a promise to, and exacted a promise in return from, Captain Meredith, and we must get home at once, in order that they may be kept."

She looked at me with a strange mixture of appeal and defiance in her eyes as she spoke, and I—feeling that it would be well to do so—hardened myself to the appeal, and only responded to the defiance by saying, with futile energy:

"I wouldn't curtail my ride one half inch in order to enable you to keep any promise to Captain Meredith; you'd no right to make one to him! Laura, you're making mischief, and, if you hate me for it, I will thwart you if I can."

Sick with annoyances, faint with a foreboding of evil, I pulled my pony up abruptly, and turned, raising my whip in warning to those behind me as I did so. Slight as it was, the action roused some hitherto dormant devil in the little mare, and with a shrieking snort she bounded past us, out of her rider's control, away into the thick of the wood.

To follow that crashing career was useless; to remain quiescent was impossible. For a moment or two we stood horror struck, listening to the progress of the creature possessed by her never-long-absent demon. At the expiration of those moments we moved, speaking to one another in incoherent words that seemed to crumble on our lips before they could be uttered.

"She can't go far in this thicket," Laura said presently, and though she endeavoured to make her tone assertive only, it was so piteously appealing that all hope died out of my own heart as I listened to her.

We galloped along a cross bridle-path that would, we surmised, cut through the mare's wild route.

"If she only steers clear of the trees and comes out on this side, where he can give her a good burst through the meadow land, he will be all right," I gasped as we tore along, and I could see that Laura's face blanched to an even deadlier white, as my words conjured up a vision of the only other alternative if the mare did not steer clear of the trees. No wonder she shuddered at the vision; no wonder that we all shrank from the reality that was forced upon us soon.

We came to a standstill on the margin of the wood, and looked distractedly down into the open, hoping to see the flying form of the mare in some place where her burst for freedom would not end so disastrously as it probably would in among the big, immovable, cruel trunks of the trees. But we looked in vain. Guinevere and her rider were nowhere to be seen, and with an exclamation that was almost a groan, Laura led the way into the heart of the grove.

Silently and slowly we picked our way in terror and despair over the high thick carpet of ferns, for what appeared an interminable time. Once or twice we muttered to one another, muttered words of counsel as to our course, or ejaculated "Hush!" or "Hark!" as fancy formed some sound in our ears, which we took for the flying horse. But during all that dreary progress we never so much as dared to murmur a word of hope!

It was all so horribly still that I thought the very Heavens would have been rent by the shriek that came from Laura's lips, when our quest ended at last by the side of the dead man and horse. Her head was smashed in by the force of the blow she had given herself against a low-growing bough, and she had fallen straight down on the spot where she had been struck, and her rider had been shot to a distance of seven or eight yards on the near side. As Laura leaped from her horse and knelt down by him, wreathing her arms round the insensible form that had never felt her embrace in life, and pressing her face down on the cold lips that had never touched hers, I realised that she was the bride of the dead, and that she would never violate the vows of her awful betrothal by marrying Major Barton!

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"WHAT a state your boots are in!" exclaimed Castalia, pausing at the foot of the stairs, which she happened to be descending as her husband entered the house. "And why did you come by the back way?"

"I was worried, and did not wish to meet people and be chattered to. I thought the meadow-path would be quiet, and so it was."

"Quiet! Yes; but how horribly muddy. Do change your wet boots at once, Ancram!"

There was little need for her to insist on this proceeding. Algernon hastened to his room, pulled off his wet boots, and desired that they should be thrown away.

"They can be dried and cleaned, sir," said plump-faced Lydia, aghast at this order.

"My good girl you may do what you please with them. I shall never wear them again. Slight boots of that sort that have once been wet through become shapeless, don't you understand? Take them away."

When the master of the house descended to the drawing-room, he found a paper, squarely folded in the shape of a letter, lying in a conspicuous position on the centre table. It was Mr. Gladwish the shoemaker's bill, accompanied by an urgent request for immediate payment.

"More wall-paper, Cassy," said her husband, flinging himself on the sofa.

"Do you know, Lydia tells me the man was quite insolent!" said Castalia. "What can be done with such people? They don't seem to me to have the least idea who we are!"

"Oh, confound the brutes! Don't let us talk about them!"

But Castalia continued to talk about them, in a strain of mingled wonder and disgust. She did not cease until dinner was announced, and Algernon was by that time so thoroughly wearied by his conjugal tête-à-tête, that he even received with something like satisfaction the announcement that Castalia expected the Misses Rose and Violet McDougall, to pass the evening at Ivy Lodge.

"I daresay your mother will come too," said Castalia, "and bring Rhoda Maxfield with her. I asked her."

"Rhoda? Why on earth do you invite that little Maxfield?"

"What is your objection to her, Ancram?"

"Oh, I have no objection to her in the world. But I should not have thought she was precisely the sort of person to suit you."

"That's exactly what Miss Bodkin says! Miss Bodkin tried to keep Rhoda apart from me, I am perfectly sure. And I can't fathom her motive. And now you say the same sort of thing. However, I always notice that you echo her words. But I don't intend to be guided by Miss Bodkin's likes and dislikes. I haven't the same opinion of Miss Bodkin's wisdom that the people have here, and I shall choose my friends for myself. It's quite absurd, the fuss that is made in this place about Miss Bodkin; absolutely sickening. Rose McDougall is the only person of the whole set who seems to keep her senses on the subject."

"Rose McDougall will never lose her senses from admiration of another woman," returned Algernon. And then the colloquy was broken up by the arrival of the Misses McDougall, clogged and cloaked, and attended by their maid-servant. After having exchanged greetings with these ladies, Algernon withdrew, murmuring something about going to smoke his cigar.

"You'll not be long, Ancram, will you?" said his wife, in a complaining tone. But he disappeared from the room without replying to her.

"I'm so dreadfully afraid that I drive your husband away when I come here, my dear," said Rose McDougall with a spiteful glance at Algernon's retreating figure.

"Good gracious, no! He doesn't think of minding you at all."

"Oh, I daresay he does not mind me; does not think me of importance enough to be taken any notice of. But I cannot help observing that he always keeps out of the way as much as possible when I am spending an evening here."

"Nonsense!" said Castalia, tranquilly continuing to string steel beads on to red silk, for the manufacture of a purse.

"You might as well say that it is I who drive Mr. Errington away, Rose," put in Violet.

"Not at all!" returned her sister, with sudden sharpness. "That's quite a different matter."

"I don't see why, Rose!"

The true answer to this remark, in the elder Miss McDougall's mind, would have been, "You are so utterly insignificant, compared with me, that you are effaced in my company, and are neither liked nor disliked on your own merits." But she could not quite say that, so she merely repeated with increased sharpness, "That's a very different matter."

Rose McDougall was one of those persons who prefer animosity to indifference. That any one should simply not care about her was a suggestion so intolerable, that she was wont to declare of persons who did not show any special desire for her society, that they hated her. She was sure Mr. A. detested the sight of her, and Miss B. was her bitter enemy. But, perhaps, in Algernon's case, she had more reason for declaring he disliked her than in many others. He did in truth object to the sort of influence she exercised over Castalia. He knew that Castalia was insatiably curious about even the most trifling details of his past life in Whitford; and he knew that Miss McDougall was very capable of misrepresenting—even of innocently misrepresenting—many circumstances and persons in such a way as to irritate Castalia's easily-aroused jealousy; and Castalia's easily-aroused jealousy was an element of discomfort in his daily life.

In a word, there had arisen, since his marriage, a smouldering sort of hostility between him and Rose McDougall. But he was far from conceiving the acrid nature of her feelings towards him. For his part, he laughed at her a little in a playful way, and contradicted her, and, above all, he did not permit her to bore him, by exacting any attention from him which he was disinclined to pay. But there was no bitterness in all that. None in the world!

Only he did not reckon on the bitterness excited in Miss Rose's breast by being laughed at and neglected. The graceful and charming way, in which the laughter and neglect were accomplished, by no means mollified the sting of them; a point which graceful and charming persons would do well sometimes to consider, but to which they are often singularly blind.

"And what have you been doing with yourself all day, Castalia dear?" asked Violet, with a great display of affection.

"Oh—what can one do with oneself in this horrid hole?"

"To be sure!" responded Violet. But she responded rather uncertainly. To her, Whitford seemed by no means a horrid hole. She had been content enough to live there for many years—ever since her uncle had brought her and her sister from Scotland in their mourning clothes, and received his orphan nieces into his home.

"Don't speak of it, my dear!" exclaimed Rose, on whom the reminiscences of the years spent in Whitford wrought by no means a softening effect. "What possessed Uncle James to stick himself down in this place, of all places, I cannot conjecture. He might as well have buried us girls alive at once."

"Oh, well, I suppose you have had time enough to get used to it," said Castalia, coolly. "Violet, will you ring the bell? It is close to you. Thank you.—Lydia," when the girl appeared, "where is your master?"

"In the dining-room, ma'am."

"What is he doing?"

"Smoking and reading, ma'am."

"Go and ask him to come here, with my love."

"How the woman worrits him! She doesn't leave him a minute's peace," was Lydia's comment to the cook on this embassy.

"She worrits everybody, in her slow, crawley kind o' way, but I'm sorry for her sometimes, too. It's a trying thing to care more for a person's little finger than a person cares for your whole body and soul," returned Polly, who had a kind of broad good-nature and candour. But Lydia felt no sympathy with her mistress, and maintained that it was all her own fault. What did she be always nagging at him for?—having that pitiless contempt for other women's mistakes in the management of their husbands, which is not uncommon with the sex.

Some such thoughts as Lydia's probably passed through the minds of the Misses McDougall, but, of course, that was not the time or place to express them. They exerted themselves to entertain their hostess with a variety of Whitford gossip, while Castalia—her attention divided between the purse she was making, and the drawing-room door, at which she hoped to see her husband presently appear — merely threw in a languid interjection now and then as her contribution to the conversation.

At length she rose, and flung the purse down on the table.

"Do you want anything, dear?" asked the obliging Violet, with officious alacrity.

"No; I shan't be long gone. Sit still, Violet."

"She's gone to implore her husband to honour us with a little of his society," whispered Rose, when Castalia had shut the door. "I'm certain of it. More fool she!"

The sisters sat silent for a few minutes. Then they heard the door of the dining-room open, as though Castalia were coming back, and the sound of voices. Rose was seated nearest to the door, which was separated from that of the little dining-room opposite by a very narrow passage, and she distinctly heard Algernon say, "Pooh! The old girl doesn't want me." And again, "Says I hate her? Nonsense! I look on her with the veneration due to her years and virtues." And then Castalia said, "Well, she can't help her years. Besides, that's not the question. You ought to come, for my sake. It's very unkind of you, Ancram." After that there was a lower murmur of speech, as though the speakers had changed their places in the room, and Rose was able to distinguish no more.

When Mrs. Algernon Errington returned to the drawing-room, she found Violet in her old seat near the pianoforte; but Rose had shifted her position, and was standing near the window.

"What are you doing there, Rose? Enjoying the prospect?" asked Castalia. The shutters were not closed, but, as the night was very dark, there certainly did not seem to be any inducement to look out of the window.

"Can't you persuade your husband to come, dear? I'm so sorry!" said Rose, turning round; and her sister looked up quickly at the sound of her voice, which, to Violet's accustomed ear, betrayed in its inflections suppressed anger. Her face, too, was crimson, and her little light blue eyes sparkled with unusual brightness.

Castalia, however, noticed none of these things. "Oh, he'll come presently," she said. "He really was finishing a cigar. I told him that you were offended with him, and——"

"I offended with your husband? Oh dear no! Why on earth should I be? You ought not to have said that, Castalia."

"Well, you thought he was offended with you, or something of the sort. It's all the same," returned Castalia, with her air of weary indifference. "And he says it's nonsense."

"My dear, I am only sorry on your account that he won't come. Really, to myself, it matters very little; very little indeed. What a pity that you have not some one to amuse him! We are none of us clever enough, that is clear."

"Oh, you are quite mistaken if you think Ancram cares particularly for clever women!" said Castalia, whose thoughts instantly reverted to Minnie Bodkin. "Even Miss Bodkin, whom everybody declares to be such a wonder of talent, bores him sometimes, I can tell you. Of course he has known her from his childhood, and all that; but he said to me only yesterday that she was conceited, and too fond of preaching. So you see! I daresay, poor thing, she fancies all the time that she is enchanting him by her wisdom."

"Dear me," said Violet timidly, and with a sort of strangled sigh. "I think that, as a rule, gentlemen don't like any kind of women except pretty women! Though, to be sure, Minnie is handsome enough if it wasn't for her affliction."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of Minnie," said Rose, viciously twitching at her sewing thread. "I meant it was a pity there was no one here who was clever enough, and who thought it worth while, to play off pretty airs and graces for Mr. Errington's amusement. That's the kind of cleverness that attracts men. And your husband, my dear, was always remarkably fond of flirting."

Violet opened her eyes in astonishment, and, from her place a little behind Castalia, made a warning grimace to her sister; but Rose only responded by a defiant toss of the head. Castalia's attention was now effectually aroused, and although she still spoke in the querulous drawl that was natural to her (or had become so from long habit), it was with a countenance earnestly addressed to her interlocutor, instead of, as hitherto, with carelessly averted eyes. "I never heard any one say before that Ancram was fond of flirting," she said.

"I should have thought it was not necessary to hear it. You might see it for yourself; unless, indeed, he is very sly about it in your presence. He, he, he!"

"See it for myself? Why—there's nobody here for him to flirt with!"

This naïve ignoring of any pretensions on the part of her present guests to be eligible for the purposes of flirtation was not lost on Rose.

"Not many who would flirt with a married man. No, I hope and believe not! But there are many kinds of flirtation, you know. There's the soft and sentimental, the shy, sweet sixteen style—little Miss Maxfield's style, for instance."

"Rhoda!"

"Yes; that is her name, I believe. I have never been intimate with the young person myself. Uncle James has always been very particular as to whom we associated with. However, since you have taken her up, my dear, I suppose she may be considered visitable."

"We have met her at Dr. Bodkin's, you know, Rose," put in Violet, who was looking and listening with a distressed expression of face.

"Oh yes; I believe Minnie asked her there at first to please Algernon. Minnie can be good-natured in that sort of way. But I don't know that it was very judicious.

"Why should you suppose it was to please my husband that Rhoda was invited to the Bodkins?" asked Castalia. "I don't see that at all. The girl might have been asked to please Miss Bodkin. I daresay she had heard of her from Mrs. Errington. Mrs. Errington is always raving about her."

Rose smiled with tightly-closed lips, and nodded. "To be sure! Poor dear Mrs. Errington—I mean no disrespect to your mother-in-law, Castalia, who is really a superior woman, only in some things she is as blind as a bat."

Castalia's sallow face was paler than

ever. Her nostrils were dilated as if she had been running fast. "You never told me a word of this before," she said.

"My dear creature," said Rose, looking full at Castalia for the first time, "why, what was there to tell? The subject was led to by chance now, and I had not the least idea that you did not know all Algy's old love-stories. Everybody here—except, I suppose, poor dear Mrs. Errington—knew of the boy-and-girl nonsense between him and that little thing. But of course it never was serious. That was out of the question."

"I don't believe it!" said Castalia, suddenly.

"Well, I daresay the thing was exaggerated, as so often happens. For my part, I never could see what there was in the girl to make so many people admire her. A certain freshness, perhaps; and some men do think a great deal of that pink-and-white sort of insipidity."

"At all events, Ancram does not care about her now," said Castalia, speaking in broken sentences, and twisting her watch-chain nervously backwards and forwards in her fingers.

"Oh, of course not! I daresay he never did care about her in earnest. But that sort of philandering is a little dangerous, isn't it?"

"He does not like me to ask her to the house even."

"Doesn't he?"

"No; he has said so more or less plainly several times. He said so this very evening."

"Did he, indeed? Well, I really am glad to hear it. I scarcely gave Algy—Mr. Errington—credit for so much—prudence!"

"Mrs. Errington and Miss Maxfield," announced Lydia at the door of the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XL.

MRS. ERRINGTON advanced towards her daughter-in-law with her habitual serene stateliness, and Rhoda followed her, modestly, looking very pretty in a new dress, the delicate hue of which set off her fair complexion to great advantage. Castalia received them much as usual; that is to say, without displaying any emotion whatever. But when Mrs. Errington took her daughter-in-law's hand, she exclaimed, "Good gracious, Castalia, how cold you are! A perfect frog! And yet this little room of yours is very warm; oppressively warm to one coming from without."

"We find the temperature so comfortable here!" said Violet. "Dear Castalia always has her rooms deliciously warm, we think."

"Perhaps, Violet, you are chilly by nature. Some constitutions are so. For myself, I have a wonderful circulation. But it is hereditary. All my branch of the Ancrams were renowned for it. I don't know, my dear Castalia, whether my cousin, Lady Seely, has the same peculiarity?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"With us it was a well-known thing among the Faculty for miles around Ancram Park. Our extremities were never cold, nor had we ever red noses. I believe a red nose was absolutely unknown in our family. No doubt that was part of the same thing; perfect circulation of the blood."

With that, Mrs. Errington sat down tolerably near the fire, and made herself comfortable. "Where is my dear boy?" she asked, after a little while. "Not at that dreadful office, I hope and trust!"

"He is at home," replied Castalia, slowly. "I asked him to come into the drawing-room, and he said he would, by-and-by."

"Oh, I daresay he will come now, dear," said Rose McDougall, without raising her eyes from her sewing.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Errington to her daughter-in-law, "and if he does come 'now,' you must not be jealous."

The two sisters glanced at the good lady in quick surprise, and then at Rhoda. Rhoda was looking, for the hundredth time, at a book of prints. It was her usual evening's occupation at Ivy Lodge. Mrs. Errington proceeded, placid, smiling, and condescending as ever: "You must not be jealous, Castalia, if he does come directly he learns that his mother is here. To be sure a wife ranks first. I have always acknowledged that; and, indeed, insisted on it. I am sure it was my own case with poor dear Dr. Errington, who would never have dreamed of putting any human being into competition with me. Still, allowances must be made for the very peculiar and devoted attachment Algy has always felt for me. He is, and ever was, an Ancram to the core. And this kind of—one may say, romantic—affection for their mothers has always distinguished the scions of our house from time immemorial. Good evening, my dear

Algy. I find our dear Castalia looking a little worn and ill, and I tell her she keeps her rooms too hot. What do you say?"

Algernon had sauntered into the room during his mother's harangue, delivered in the full mellow voice that belonged to her, and now bent to kiss the worthy lady's cheek as he greeted her. It was a cool, firm, rosy cheek. Indeed, Mrs. Errington's freshness and bloom were in singular opposition to Castalia's sallow haggardness, and made the elder lady look doubly buxom and buoyant by the force of contrast.

"You're flourishing, at all events, chère madame," said Algernon, looking at his mother with unfeigned satisfaction. It was a relief to him to see a contented, smiling, comfortable countenance. Nevertheless, although agreeable to look upon, Mrs. Errington was apt to become a little wearisome in point of conversation, and her dutiful son cast his eyes round the circle in search of a pleasant seat wherein to bestow himself. But his glance met no response. Rose McDougall had drawn near his wife, and after very stiffly returning his bow, had ceased to take any notice of him, markedly avoiding his eye and keeping silence after he had spoken. Violet was divided between listening to the elder Mrs. Errington, and watching her sister. Castalia was more lazy, more silent, more indifferent than usual. Algernon was as unaccustomed as a spoiled child to be taken no notice of. He to stand among those women as a person of secondary importance, not greeted, not flattered, not smiled upon!

He looked across the group round the fire to Rhoda, who happened to raise her eyes at that moment, and being taken by surprise at meeting his, dropped them hastily, with a vivid blush. Rhoda's blushes were as unmeaning as the smiles of an infant. The most trivial cause made her change colour, as Algernon very well knew. But at least the soft bright pink hue on pretty Rhoda's cheek showed some emotion, however slight or transient, at the sight of him. And, moved partly by a boyish, pettish resentment against the others, partly by the desire to hear a pleasant voice and pleasant words, and look upon a pretty woman's face with its delicate contour and fine subtle changes of tint, he walked across the room, and seated himself beside Rhoda Maxfield.

Castalia pushed her chair back out of the lamplight. "You can't see to do your purse in that dark corner, Castalia," exclaimed Mrs. Errington.

"I don't want to do my purse. I'm sick of it."

"Naughty, fickle girl!" This was said playfully. Then in a loud whisper, addressed to the McDougalls as well as to her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Errington exclaimed, "Doesn't Rhoda look charming to-night? That pale lilac is the very colour for her. Trying to skins that have the least tinge of yellow in them, but she is so wonderfully fair! Dear me, it reminds one of old times to see those two side by side. As children they were always together."

No one responded. Violet McDougall fidgeted nervously on her chair, and cast an appealing look at her sister. She would have tried to lead Mrs. Errington to talk of something else had she dared, but in Rose's presence Violet never ventured to take the initiative; and, besides, she was afraid of doing more harm than good, Mrs. Errington not being one of those persons who take a hint easily. The silence of her three listeners was no check to the worthy lady's eloquence. She continued to descant on Rhoda's attractions, and graces, and good manners; she dropped hints of the excellent opportunities Rhoda now had of "settling in life," only that she was a little fastidious from long association with such refined persons as the Erringtons, and had turned the cold shoulder to several well-to-do wooers in her own rank of life; she related anecdotes of Rhoda's early devotion to herself and her son, until Violet McDougall muttered under her breath, in a paroxysm of nervous impatience, "One would think the woman was doing it on purpose!"

Meanwhile Algernon was talking to Rhoda more freely and confidentially than he had spoken to her for a long, long time. He was indulging in the luxury of playing victim, before a spectator whose pity would certainly be admiring, not contemptuous. And, as he spoke, the old habit of appealing to Rhoda, and confiding in Rhoda, and taking Rhoda's sympathy for granted, resumed its power over him. There was no strain of tenderness in his words. He said not a syllable that his wife, and all the world, might not freely have listened to. He talked as a petted boy might talk to an idolising sister—with a mixture of boastfulness and repining, which he would have been ashamed to display to a man.

Rhoda listened with sorrowful interest. How could it be that Algernon should have to endure all these troubles and mortifications? He was so clever, so accomplished, so highly connected, had such great and powerful relations! It appeared natural enough that folks like Mrs. Thimbleby, and the Gladwishes, and even her brother Seth, should sometimes be pressed for money. She herself, although she had never known privation in her father's house, had, until within the last year or so, been accustomed to the most rigid economy—not to say parsimony—and it had never cost her a care. But that Algernon Errington should desire money for various purposes, and not be able to get it, seemed to her a very hard case.

But Algernon's note was not all of complaint. There were occasional intervals in which he spoke of the brightness of his prospects ultimately, when once he should have tided over his present difficulties, and have got out of Whitford. And there were a few flourishes about his social successes in town last year. In the indulgence of his all-absorbing egotism, he seemed to forget that the girl beside him had ever been—or had ever had either expectation or right to be—anything more to him than the patient, admiring, sisterly, humble confidante, on whom he had relied for praise and sympathy from the time of his earliest recollections, and who supplied him with the most delicious food for his vanity, because unmingled with any doubt of its genuineness. No thought of her feelings (save that they were kindly and admiring towards himself) crossed his mind whilst he talked to her, bending down his head and gesticulating slightly with his white, handsome hands.

But when his mother called to her, "Come, Rhoda, I think we must be going; I heard the carriage at the gate, child. You and Algy have been having a famous long chat! Reminded you of old times, didn't it?" When I say Algernon heard these words, a spark of manhood made his cheeks tingle and his tongue stammer as he said, "I—I'm afraid I must have been—boring you dreadfully, Rhoda?"

In truth he was surprised to find that he had spent the whole evening in talking to Rhoda about himself. He glanced quickly at his wife, but she was occupied with the Misses McDougall. So occupied was she that she hardly returned Mrs. Errington's "Good night," which negligence, however, little ruffled that lady's equanimity. But when Rhoda approached to take leave of Castalia, the latter moved aside so suddenly that the movement might almost be called a start, and facing round, came opposite to her own image in the mirror above the chimney-piece, with Rhoda's fair image looking over its shoulder.

For one second, perhaps—it could scarcely have been more—the smooth surface of the glass gave back the two women's faces: one youthful, lily-hued, innocently surprised, with chestnut eyebrows and shining chestnut curls, and tender rosy lips parted like those of a child; the other yellow, worn full of fretful creases, with glittering, eager eyes, and a thin mouth set into a straight line, and yet over all the undefinable pathos of a suffering spirit; behind the two, Algernon looking into his wife's dark eyes and recognising something there that he had never seen in them before.

In no longer time than it would take for a breath to dim the mirror all these images were gone, and the cold shiny glass indifferently showed a confusion of cloaks and shoulders, and the back of a huge bonnet crowning Mrs. Errington's majestic figure.

From that day forth Castalia gave herself up to a devouring jealousy of Rhoda. She spied her goings and comings; she watched her husband's face when the girl was spoken of; she opened the letters that she found in the pockets of his clothes; she lay in wait to surprise some proof, no matter what, of a tender feeling on his part for his old love. In a word, she pursued her own misery with more eagerness, vigilance, and unflagging singleness of purpose than most people devote to the attainment of any object whatsoever.

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXV. A CLUE.

GERTRUDE was very far from being "herself again" on the morrow, and Mr. Wilde's face, when he came down from her chamber, was even graver, and more perplexed, than on the previous day. I was determined upon this occasion to speak with him alone, and evaded Mrs. Raeburn by walking out of doors, and along the road into the town until the doctor overtook me. He would have cantered by with a wave of his riding-whip, and a cheerful nod of his head, if I had permitted him; but when I held up my hand and called to him, he instantly drew in his rein with a "What is it, Harry?"

"Mr. Wilde," said I, earnestly, with my fingers upon his horse's mane, "for Heaven's sake, tell me the truth about Gertrude. I have a right to ask it, for she has promised to one day become my wife. What is the matter with her? Conceal nothing from me, I entreat you. Is she—is she dangerously ill?"

"My poor boy," said the doctor, kindly, "you ask too much. I would tell you the truth about Miss Floyd—at least I think I would—if I knew it myself; but at present I do not know it. I only suspect what is the matter."

"And what is it you suspect?"

"I will tell you at another time, not now, Harry," answered he, evasively. "Even my suspicions have as yet no certain ground, and a doctor does not like to be made to eat his own words, you know. As to the young lady's being dangerously ill, I can be a little explicit. I do not think she is. She is certainly in no immediate danger. Still, if matters do not improve with her, the case must needs be very serious."

"And can I do nothing—nothing, Mr. Wilde?" cried I, imploringly.

The doctor looked at me very hard, nursing his chin in his hand; then slowly shook his head.

"No, Harry—nothing directly. But if anything unusual occurs—if Miss Floyd should be taken suddenly ill, for instance—then you will come to me as fast as your legs can carry you. It will not, you will understand, be necessary for you to wait to be sent in that case."

"I should think not, indeed. I will come like the wind," said I, eagerly.

"And in the meantime," continued Mr. Wilde, "it may be worth while, perhaps, to take note, so far as you can, of how the patient is looked after. I don't doubt that every care will be taken of her; but Mr. Alexander, of course, absorbs a good deal of Mrs. Raeburn's attention; and it may be advisable—indeed, it may be absolutely necessary—to employ a nurse. John mentions sometimes, you tell me, how many hours his mother has been sitting with his uncle. Well, in such a case, she cannot have been with Miss Floyd, you know. Mrs. Raeburn thinks, like some other ladies in her position, that she can attend to everything and manage everybody; yet there may be neglect for all that. You may, therefore, play the sensible part of watch-dog with advantage. If the time should come when you may be of greater service, I will not fail to make use of you."

"Thank you, thank you," cried I, earnestly. "You will come every day and see her, will you not?"

"Yes, my lad, yes." He held out his hand, which was unusual with him, with an encouraging smile, and bade me be of good hope. Yet, as he rode away, I noticed that his face grew very grave again.

He came the next day, and the next, for weeks, with varying reports as to my darling. Sometimes she would rally considerably, though she never became well enough to come downstairs; at others, it was plain that her progress was not towards recovery, but towards that other pole which those who love the sufferer dare not name, but the sense of whose icy neighbourhood chills them to the core.

In that gloomy house there was not one ray of cheer, except when my Aunt Eleanor drove over to see Gertrude, which she did twice or thrice. Her words were always words of comfort.

"Gerty is young, Harry," said she; "and she will get over this. If I could only carry her off with me to Stanbrook, she would be well in a week."

But there was no talk, even from Mr. Wilde, of moving Gertrude now; she could not have borne the exertion, even had it not been the depth of winter, as it was by this time become; yet I quite felt with Aunt Eleanor that the atmosphere of the Briary was enough to extinguish any one. "My dear, I believe it would put out a candle—like fire-damp," said my aunt, whose forte was not science; "while having that horrible vampire to wait upon her must be anything but conducive to recovery."

I watched the vampire, according to Mr. Wilde's instructions, but was bound to confess that she seemed very assiduous in her attentions to Gertrude. Nothing, too, appeared to Mr. Wilde to be left undone that should be done; and yet my heart foreboded, with ever-menacing gloom, that, notwithstanding all this care, my darling was passing away from us. Another opinion had been consulted without any change being adopted in the treatment of the case. Mr. Wilde was doing all he knew, and all that science knew, for the patient, said the new doctor. The issue was not in mortal hands.

My nervousness and anxiety grew so excessive, that I felt that I myself was on the brink of adding a third to the sick-list at the Priory. My appetite failed me, and sleep deserted my pillow. My brains, like my eyes, were ever on the watch. At this period—it was the day before the second quarter came round of brother Alec's annuity payment, and my uncle was expected on the ensuing morning to give the necessary certificate—a circumstance so curious occurred that it almost made me fear that my wits were failing, that it was the result of an over-wrought imagination, and not reality. I was retiring one night to my own room, leaving the attorney and John below stairs discussing their gin and water—which, in Mrs. Raeburn's absence, had become a nightly institution with them—when, on passing brother Alec's door, I perceived it to be ajar; the firelight only flickered through the crack, showing that in all probability the sick man was alone, and, indeed, I heard Mrs. Raeburn's voice speaking in low tones in Gertrude's apartment, which was opposite. In a general way, and indeed throughout the daytime, brother Alec's room was kept religiously guarded, nor had I been admitted to it since the occasion I have described, now three months ago; neither had Mr. Wilde seen him throughout that time, during which he had been reported to be much in the same condition as usual. Acting on a sudden impulse, I blew out my candle and stepped into the room, leaving the door unclosed behind me. All things within looked as when I had seen them last, except that the chair, in which Mrs. Raeburn was used to sit had been removed, from the window to the bedside. It was, however, of course empty; the book only of the indefatigable watcher lay on the seat, ready to be resumed when she returned. Downstairs, I had never seen her with a book, except on Sundays, when she had been wont to read family prayers in a rasping voice, before her duties as hospital nurse had interfered with that practice. Not a sound was to be heard; not even the breathing of the invalid, whose form I could distinctly perceive, though his face was turned from me.

"If he were asleep," thought I, "I should surely hear him breathe," so it could be no harm to speak to him.

"Mr. Raeburn, Mr. Raeburn," said I softly; then a little louder, "Mr. Raeburn, Mr. Raeburn!"

But, whether I spoke soft or loud, there was no reply: a cinder dropping on the hearth, and that clicking of the grate which is always heard where fire is kept up continuously, alone broke the silence of the sick-room. My nerves, which had been wrought up to a high pitch, began to be painfully excited, and fearing I scarce knew what, yet resolute to know the worst, I touched brother Alec on the shoulder and again called him by his name. He neither moved nor spoke, but the hoarse monotonous voice of Chico suddenly broke forth from some shadowy corner with this reply, "Dead, dead, dead; only think of that!"

I did think of it; I had been thinking of it all along; and the expression of the thought thus so eerily conveyed brought the dews of terror to my forehead. I fled noiselessly to my own room, where I lay awake for hours listening to that melancholy refrain, deadened by distance, yet only too distinct to my harassed ear, and picturing to myself that dumb and motionless figure with the watcher by its side. Presently, waking from a feverish sleep, I heard, or thought I heard, some movement beneath my bed. It could not be the bird, since he was still repeating his sepulchral sing-song in the next room; it could not be the bull-dog, for Mrs. Raeburn had sent him away months ago, "to a friend who could be trusted to take care of him;" in other words, as I shrewdly suspected, he had been poisoned. For all I knew, up to this hour, it might have been a mouse; but I got up and lit the candle, and lifted up the valance of the bed. To my horror, its light flashed upon a coffin! It was new and large, and had an inscription in gilt letters on the lid, which I did not stay to read, but I fled with trembling limbs to John's apartment. I was no coward, but my nerves were altogether upset, and I had become a prey to my own morbid imagination. My conviction was that brother Alec was dead, that his coffin was actually prepared for him, and that, somehow or other, he had come to his end by foul means.

John himself looked scarcely less scared than I when I awoke him with this intelligence, which I took no pains to soften in expressing it.

"Uncle Alec dead?" cried he, presently, when he had got his colour back; "that would be a pretty business, my good fellow, when he is going to draw his quarter's income this very morning. You must be out of your mind, Sheddon!"

"At all events, he neither spoke nor moved, I tell you, when I called him by name, and even shook him; and I am perfectly confident he was not asleep."

"That is nothing," answered John, confidently; "he will sometimes lie for hours without taking notice of anything or anybody, then, all of a sudden, he becomes quite himself again."

"Let us go into his room and look at him," cried I resolutely, for whatever spectacle I might behold there seemed preferable to that which my imagination suggested; besides, the presence of my companion gave me courage.

"Certainly not," answered John, positively. "My mother is there, remember, who would certainly let us know if there was anything amiss, and who would not like being woke up, when once she has got to sleep in that arm-chair, I promise you. I'll come and look at your coffin, however, with a great deal of pleasure."

I own I was not sorry for his escort as I returned to my room, nor was I the first to lift that valance again. "Why, my good fellow, you have literally found a mare's nest!" chuckled John. "It's the case that holds the mace and things; my father, as you know, being mayor this year."

John was quite right; the Kirkdale regalia had been deposited under the head of my bed, for want of a better place of accommodation for it, and it had given me a pretty fright. Rather to my astonishment, however, John did not rally me about my foolish fears. "It was really enough to give you a turn," said he, "with your mind so full of morbid ideas; but I do hope you will now dismiss them for good and all. I would not say anything about having gone into uncle Alec's room, if I were you; my mother would be sure to reproach herself—which, with her, you know, means pitching into other people—for having left him alone, with the door open."

"Very good," said I; "then she shall not know anything about it." But at the same time I made up my mind that Mr. Wilde should know all. My superstitious fears (if such I can call them) were, however, allayed with the morning light; and before mid-day I had the satisfaction of hearing from my uncle's lips that, though the sick man showed more of lethargy than on the last occasion on which he had seen him, he looked by no means like one on the point of dissolution.

In the afternoon came the doctor, as usual, and he, too, had a somewhat improved report to give of his patient. If Gertrude was not positively better, she was not worse; and things had now got to that pass with her that even so much of good tidings was welcome. The shadow of coming evil seemed to lift from my mind a little, as the mist lifts from the mountain, and displays a glint of sunshine. I felt sufficiently relieved for the moment to consult Mr. Wilde about my own health. I was nervous and full of morbid fancies, I said; and when he asked, "What fancies?" I narrated my visit to brother Alec's chamber and its results. He listened with great attention, which was a sure sign with him that the matter appeared to be of some importance, for he, professionally, was very impatient of trifles.

"Are you quite sure you did go into the room, Sheddon?"

"Quite certain; and also that I touched the sick man's shoulder."

"You mean the bed-clothes about his shoulder."

"Well, yes; but he must have felt me touch him; of that I am confident, and also little less so that he was not asleep." As for the rest, I allowed that I was too excited and alarmed to speak to details.

"When did you see Mr. Alexander last? I mean, before last night," was his next inquiry.

"Not for three months; none but his own family—not even the servants, and now, of course, not Gertrude—are admitted to his room. But my uncle has seen him this morning, and he describes him as no worse. He was even able, although with difficulty, to sign the receipt."

"What receipt?"

"Oh, I forgot; that ought to be a secret; however, it will not be revealed by you, I know." And thereupon I told him about Mr. Raeburn the elder having become a life annuitant.

"That accounts for the care that is taken of him, you see," observed I, in conclusion.

"I see," said Mr. Wilde; but his chin was in his hand, and his thoughts, I could see, were engaged on some other subject.

"And have you had any other morbid feelings or fancies, Sheddon?"

"Nothing of any consequence."

"I am the best judge of that, my lad," answered Mr. Wilde, gravely. "Pray tell me everything without concealment."

"Well, the truth is, I have been so anxious and depressed about Gertrude of late, that I have sometimes seemed to myself to be going out of my mind. I have been in that sort of state, that I have scarcely known whether to trust my own eyes; just as in the case of Mr. Alexander, last night."

"You have seen something else then? What was it?"

"It was something of a very different kind, yet equally strange; indeed, so much so, that, though the occurrence happened in broad daylight, I can scarcely believe in its reality. On the morning of the day before yesterday, when poor Gerty became so much worse, you remember, I happened to rise earlier than usual, and, finding no one in the breakfast-room, I went into what is called the library to fetch a book. The room is seldom or never used, and only contains one small bookcase, which stands behind the door. While looking over it I heard a female step cross the hall and enter the room, but, concluding it to be one of the servants come, perhaps, to dust the furniture, I did not turn round or give any notice of my presence. Immediately afterwards I heard a sort of tearing noise, and, looking up, I perceived Mrs. Raeburn stooping over the horsehair sofa, and, as I thought, pulling the hairs out. Was it not strange?"

Mr. Wilde's expressive face was looking volumes of intense interest. "It was very strange," said he, moving to the door of the drawing-room, in which we were, and quietly turning the key; "so strange that I should not like anybody but myself to hear you tell the tale."

His tone was so serious that I knew at once he had a doubt of my sanity.

"No, Mr. Wilde," said I, "I know what I am saying, and also that it is the truth. The thing certainly happened, though to me, who knew how careful Mrs. Raeburn is about her furniture, it seemed inconceivable that she should thus destroy it with her own hands. I waited quite quietly where I was, for I judged she would not have relished my being a witness of such proceedings, and saw her put about half a pound of the horsehair, as I should judge, into her pocket, and with it she left the room, without suspecting that it had contained a spectator. I examined the sofa afterwards; the stuffing had been abstracted from it underneath, but I found the hole through which it had been taken. She means to make fishing-tackle out of it, perhaps, or, at all events, something by which she may turn an honest penny. Yet you cannot wonder, as I have said, that I scarcely believed my own eyes."

Mr. Wilde made no reply.

"Can I see this sofa, Harry?" asked he, in his usual quiet tones.

"Certainly," I said, and led the way into the little library, where my companion took the same precaution as before of locking the door. Then he knelt down under the sofa and examined it carefully.

"There has been a cut here, and here, and here," observed he, "though they have all been neatly sewn up again. Notice what care, too, has been taken to distribute the loss, so that the absence of the stuffing should not be noticed."

"That is only what I should have expected," remarked I. "Mrs. Raeburn is a most economical housewife, and very clever with her fingers."

"Not only with her fingers, Sheddon," returned Mr. Wilde, rising from his knees, and looking as grave as one upon whose lips a prayer yet lingers. "She is as cunning as the Fiend himself; and yet, thanks to you, her wickedness is, I believe, about to be discovered, and she has at last been delivered into my hands."

CHAPTER XXVI. MRS. RAEBURN'S BOWER.

THOSE words of Mr. Wilde, so unexpected, so suggestive of I know not what atrocity, and spoken with all the severity of a judge who is about to punish, astounded me.

"What wickedness has this woman done!" cried I, the picture of Mrs. Raeburn's steadfast figure, sitting by brother Alec's bed, recurring involuntarily to my mind once more and filling me with dark misgivings.

"I will tell you, Sheddon, but not here nor now. Hush! what is that?" cried he, holding up his hand for silence. "I hear a footstep in the hall."

I opened the door a little, as noiselessly as I could, and through the chink beheld one of the servants carrying a covered plate upstairs, doubtless for one of the two sick folks.

"I would give much to get that plate," murmured Mr. Wilde, wistfully. "No! no! not yet," added he, as I was about to rush out and possess myself of it at all hazards. "Wait a bit!"

We heard the maid knock softly at the door of brother Alec's sitting-room. Immediately afterwards Mrs. Raeburn's step was heard passing into her room. She stayed there for a minute or two, and then returned to brother Alec's apartment. "Remain here till I come back," exclaimed my companion. He ran upstairs very quickly, yet without noise, and, impatient as I was for his return, I scarcely missed him before he was once more with me.

"You have not got the plate?" said I, excitedly.

"I have some of its contents, however, which are sufficient for my purpose."

Then I saw he had an envelope in his hand filled with fragments of a fricasseed chicken. He spread these out on a piece of paper, and, taking a magnifying-glass from his pocket, examined them attentively. As he did so his grave face seemed to light up, not joyfully, but with a sort of fierce exultation.

"It is as I suspected," I heard him murmur below his breath.

"What have you suspected? What have you found?" inquired I.

"Oh, nothing," said he quietly, "except that the pepper is rather too coarse and large."

"Great Heaven!" cried I, alarmed more even than before by the bitter irony of his tone, "you don't mean to tell me that anyone is being poisoned in this house?"

"God forbid, my dear Sheddon," answered my companion earnestly. "I have discovered something, it is true, but nothing that you can even guess at. What it is must not be revealed to anyone at present. If you knew what I know, others in this house would read the secret in your face; and they must not read it."

"But what can I do, Mr. Wilde? I feel I must do something, or I shall go mad. You have hinted at too much not to tell me all."

"You shall hear all in good time, my dear lad; but at present, beyond all things, it is necessary for you to be calm. When I asked of you the other day to keep a watch upon Mrs. Raeburn's actions, I noticed that though you did consent, since it was for Gertrude's sake, it brought the colour to your cheeks, as if you would have said, 'Does this man wish me then to be a spy?' I have now to ask you to do something—not dangerous, nor difficult; for, if that were all, you would not hesitate, but at which your sense of honour will still more revolt. Is it possible, Sheddon, think you, between now and dusk for you to gain admittance to Mrs. Raeburn's room without being perceived by anyone, and to search it thoroughly?"

"It is possible, no doubt," said I; "but unless I am convinced that there is a justification for such a course——"

"There is not only justification, lad," interrupted Mr. Wilde, earnestly, "but a necessity; it is the only certain and immediate means that I can think of for averting from this house a very terrible catastrophe. That astounds you, as well it may, but it is nevertheless the fact. I am not one to speak idle words; but, if you have not sufficient confidence in me to do my bidding, I must employ other agents, less fastidious, but also less secure.

Mrs. Raeburn's room shall be searched before the sun sets; on that I am resolved. It rests with you whether that search shall be made by strangers, which must needs cause a public scandal, or by yourself, which will be known to me alone."

"I will search it, Mr. Wilde!" exclaimed I, with desperation, "since it needs must be so. But what am I to look for?"

"I cannot tell you that for certain," was the unexpected reply. "It will, I think, be some sharp instrument. No weapon," added he, perceiving that I shuddered, "yet something that will seem as much out of place in a lady's room as any weapon."

I nodded in acquiescence, though I did not understand him, and was too thunderstruck to speak.

"Search the room thoroughly," he continued, "and if you find this thing, bring it to my house after dark; but, at all events, come thither to-night without letting any one suspect you of doing so. Then, you shall know all."

With that he left the room abruptly, and without another word. Ere I had recovered from the astonishment caused by his request, or began to regret my promise to perform it, he had quitted the house, and I heard the ring of his horse's hoofs upon the wintry ground. In what a terrible position did I find myself! That Mr. Wilde was a sagacious, as well as a thoroughly honest, gentleman, I was well convinced; but what if his sagacity should in this case be mistaken? Nothing might be amiss, perhaps, after all; and, even if it were, it was possible that Mrs. Raeburn might not be the offender. Yet I had pledged myself to steal, like a thief, into that lady's room—she being my hostess—and peep and pry until I had found something which indeed might be there; but which seemed about as likely to be so as an electric-machine or a windmill. Still, those words, "It is the only certain and immediate means of averting from this house a very terrible catastrophe," coming from the lips of such a man as Mr. Wilde, had too tremendous a significance to be set aside by any considerations of my personal dignity. The sense, too, of some foul play in connection with brother Alec still haunted me, and gave gravity to his words. Besides, I had undertaken the matter, and there was now nothing for me but to go through with it. Luncheon had long been over. The attorney and his son were in the office; the servants were all below-stairs; Mrs. Raeburn, I knew, was in close attendance upon her brother-in-law; the opportunity was as good now as it would ever be. Moreover, the more I thought about the enterprise the less I liked it—like a bather who stands shivering on the river-brink—and, therefore, I judged it best to set about it at once. Listening cautiously in the hall, then, and hearing no one stirring on the floor above, I ran softly upstairs, and, instead, as usual, of making for my own apartment, darted into that chamber which was always called Mrs. Raeburn's, although, I suppose, in law at least, the attorney might have had some common claim to it. He had a dressing-room, however, of about five feet by four, that was all his own, and which communicated with the bed-room on the north side, as did Gertrude's apartment on the east; though that, of course, had also a door of its own, which opened upon the passage. This latter was now used only by the servants, Mrs. Raeburn invariably visiting the sick girl through the former means of communication. She had, I conjectured, just been to see her patient; and there was, therefore, small probability of her return for some little time; still, the idea of it alarmed me to the last degree. Hitherto, I had never feared her, because I had had nothing to reproach myself with, and was free to entertain my own opinion of her demerits; but, in the present case, I felt no such independence. Whatever wicked schemes she might be devising with respect to her invalid guest, I had myself no knowledge of them, and, if discovered, would be utterly without excuse for my most discreditable position. As I entered the room, and softly closed the door behind me, I found, to my horror, that it was already occupied. Before me stood a human form, in a crouching attitude, and with features expressing the greatest discomfiture and dismay. I started, and it started too, when I perceived that it was but the counterfeit presentment of myself in the tall pier-glass, which had so often reflected Mrs. Raeburn's stately form. If it had been that lady herself, she might have knocked me down with a feather; and it was quite probable that she would have done so, but with some much more formidable weapon. There was a large club in the corner of the room which would have served such a purpose to a nicety; the attorney had shown it to me, on one occasion, as his "sedative" for burglars, it being heavily loaded at the knob with lead. The other objects of furniture were of the same kind as I had seen elsewhere in "best bedrooms." Beside the pier-glass there was a handsome mirror, let into the wardrobe, which gave me another "turn" as I passed it. I searched that wardrobe thoroughly, pausing every moment to listen for a footfall, just as other young gentlemen do, I suppose, when engaged in their first burglary. Not a sound was to be heard in the passage; nor from Gertrude's room, which, indeed, was shut off with a baize door besides the ordinary one. I even climbed a chair, and swept the top of the wardrobe with my hand; it was singularly free from the dust that generally collects in such a place; for if Mrs. Raeburn was deficient in the first of virtues—godliness—she had reason to boast herself, in all matters of the house, of the second—cleanliness—as her servants knew to their cost. I peeped over the canopy of the four-post bedstead, taking as much care to erase the impression of my foot upon the bed-clothes, as an Indian who has foes after him on the war-trail. Then I examined every cupboard, pigeon-hole, and drawer.

Throughout these investigations terror, lest I should be discovered by the proprietress of the apartment, made my limbs tremble and my heart go pit-a-pat. Still I went through with the whole disgraceful business as conscientiously as though animated by the glow of duty. I even turned up the carpet at the corners, and looked under that. It was all to no purpose; I had evidently been sent on a fool's errand. Convinced of this, it struck me that I would leave the room by means of the dressing-closet, since, if observed in that proceeding, I might make up some kind of explanation, however feeble, to account for it. It would be, anyhow, more easy to frame an excuse for being found in the attorney's private apartment than in that of his wife. I therefore took that course. Mr. Raeburn's dressing-room was a very comfortless one, not boasting even a carpet, and there was a conspicuous absence of the neatness so remarkable in the larger room. Its master, I knew, hated to have any of the papers in his office dusted or displaced, and here, also, were the evidences of this characteristic. The floor was strewed with boots and books. The plain deal shelves that lined the walls were filled—the lower with clothes, the higher ones with tape-tied papers. The latter, to judge by the layers of dust about them, had been untouched for years. I mounted the only chair there was, and ran my eye over these things. At the corner of the topmost shelf the dust did not lie so thick in one place, but had been swept off as though by the passage of some object, probably the owner's hand. And here, behind the papers, there was a something wrapped up in chamois leather, which, when I touched it, rattled with a metallic sound.

I trembled, but no longer with apprehensions upon my own account. A thrill of horror—born of the conviction that Mr. Wilde had not set me on this search for naught; that I held in my hand the evidence of some desperate purpose, perhaps even of some dark crime in which my hostess was engaged—ran through my frame. I scarcely needed the testimony of my eyes, when, as I turned back the covering of soft leather, they fell upon a delicate instrument of steel, which, though shaped like a chopping-machine, was of such microscopic dimensions that it could have chopped no meat, but only food for fairies!

PARIS GRAVEYARDS.

There are more than twenty of them, and they are all getting as crowded as Brompton Cemetery; a great deal too crowded, that is, for the health of the people who live round them. What is to be done? Cremation is not to be thought of; "the church is against it." A Frenchman is generally as superstitious at bottom as a Druid-ridden old Gaul; and, however he may have lived, he takes care (in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred) to get "reconciled to the church" before he dies. Therefore burial, not burning, will continue to be the mode among our neighbours, who (in spite of their reputation as revolutionists) are really more tied to routine than the stoutest Tory of us all. They cannot even make up their minds to finish a Paris Woking, begun by Baron Hausmann, and surely as much needed as that other imperial legacy, the Opera House. But the great necropolis at Méry-sur-Oise remains unenclosed; the railway, which is to join it with Paris, is still to be made; and the "fosses communes" in all the cemeteries are so full, that, if the cholera does come, it will spread "like a house on fire."

Paris, the home of ideas, has always

been singularly behindhand in the prosaic work of looking after the unpleasant little facts, care or neglect in which makes life wholesome or the reverse. If those who judge of Paris from a hotel where English go, or from a "pension" in the Rue St. Honoré, were just to live a few days on the Quai St. Michel, or in almost any unfashionable quarter, they would wonder how civilised beings could put up with such disgustingly primitive sewage arrangements, for instance. The Parisians are the very Pharisees of civilisation: they make clean the outside of the cup and platter. Till this last winter (when their sweeping-brigade broke down after one heavy snow fall) their well-swept streets have for years (even during the Commune) been a contrast to those of snow-choked, mud-begrimed London. Outside the houses, all is trim and neat; but of the insides, often, the less that is said the better.

So it has been always in this matter of burial. The old burial-ground of the Innocents was kept open, until the earth actually refused to hide its dead any longer. The tale is a ghastly one. Never did red tape and vested interests hold on with deadlier pertinacity.

The story goes that this old burial-ground was used in Roman times. Very possibly it was; for the Roman road to the north ran across it, and we know the Romans used to bury along the highways, outside their towns. Anyhow, in Philip Augustus's time, it was a horse market. He walled it round (in 1186) and built a church, dedicated to the Holy Innocents; and gradually cloister after cloister was added, each with its ghastly fresco of the "Danse macabre" (Dance of Death), until no wonder the place became the most popular promenade in Paris. As a burying-ground it soon got over full; two-and-twenty parishes, besides the prison of the Châtelet and the great hospital, the Hôtel Dieu, sent their dead into it. The charnel-houses, which ran the whole length of the cloisters, were soon choked with bones; the vaults of the church could literally hold no more coffins. After the fashion of those "good old times," houses were built close up against the cloisters—tall houses, like those of old Edinburgh—so that the place got to be like a well, with rottenness instead of water at bottom. "Pourrissoir"—rotting-hole—was the old name for it, and a very appropriate name too. Of course fever was endemic in the tall houses; but nobody thought anything of that (fever was very common in those times) till 1554, when two doctors, Fernel and Houillier, drew up a strong report; but nothing came of it. In 1786 they were still burying in the old reeking ground, though every now and then somebody made a spasmodic effort to force "the authorities" to interfere. The Paris people liked their old graveyard; they had an idea that the soil possessed the miraculous property of "eating a body up" in four-and-twenty hours. Besides the Dance of Death, there was the alabaster skeleton (now to be seen in the Louvre—there is such an one in Wells, and in several of our cathedrals), the grand statue of Christ, called Le Dieu de la Cité; half-a-dozen mortuary chapels, belonging to noble families; and the carved pulpit, from which the popular preachers gave forth harangues which were far more political than religious. There were other attractions, too, of the sort to be met with in Paul's Walk, as it is described by Ben Jonson; and, to crown all, the cloisters were as full of stalls as a modern arcade. A queer place it was to go shopping in; yet the milliners drove a roaring trade, and so did the letter-writers, at the rate of from ten to twenty sols for the high-polite style, and five or six sols for a mere commonplace epistle. Strange! While the charnel-house floors were bending beneath the weight of bones, the crowd, busy about ten thousand trifles, full of that "mouvement" which is to the Frenchman as precious as the breath of his nostrils, swarmed through the grim cloisters, just as it swarms nowadays, in spite of ruined Hôtel de Ville, and burned Tuileries, and diminishing population, and German indemnity, through the galleries of the Palais-Royal.

At last, in 1763, the Paris parliament took up the matter in earnest. A commission inquired, and reported; and, two years later, a peremptory order was issued to close all existing burying-grounds, to stop burying in the churches, and to open five or six cemeteries outside the city. The new act was to take effect from January 1st, 1766; but it remained a dead letter. The clergy, with popular feeling to back them, kept up the old state of things for twenty years longer; and would have kept it up till the Revolution, but for an affair which sickened even Parisians of the burying-ground of the Innocents at any rate. The winter of 1779-80 had been unusually wet, with short frosts every now and then; just the weather to make walls give way. One February morning a householder in Laundry-street, which ran close by the cemetery, went down into his cellar, but was driven back by a smell against which even his practised nose was not proof. He told his neighbours, and a number of them, with handkerchiefs steeped in vinegar, and cheering one another on, ventured in. There they saw a horrible sight: the party-walls had given way, and through the breach a score or so of dead bodies had come rolling in, along with the churchyard mould. The police hastened to the spot, drew up their procès-verbal (nothing ever happened in France without being the subject of a procès-verbal), and charged all present to keep the matter close; getting, in fact, very angry with the discoverer, "for not having carefully concealed so grave a scandal." But people will talk; and so the thing got wind. There was a great outcry; and at last, at the very end of the year, the graveyard was closed.

Even then mother church would not give up her hold on it. The doctors advised that the whole contents—soil, and bones, and all—should be dug out and carted away, as the only sure way of preventing epidemics from breaking out every now and then. But the archbishop held out for six years; and then De Crosne, just made lieutenant of police, wishing to signalise his appointment by giving the Parisians something useful, bought the ground, and, backed by a report of the Royal Medical Society, drawn up by the celebrated Thouret, got the church and cloisters pulled down, the monuments placed elsewhere, the earth to a depth of some seven feet carried out, and all the contents of the bone-houses deposited in "the catacombs." I remember when, years ago, I first went to Paris, everybody used to go to see these "catacombs"—a very silly business; for, though the name is the same, they are not like those Roman catacombs in which you can still trace the records of the lives and deaths of the earliest Roman Christians. The Paris catacombs are just long quarries in the gypsum. We have much the same on Coombe Down, overlooking Bath; only that the Bath quarries have not yet been used as bone-houses, and so are not, like those of Paris, "consecrated ground."

After sufficient "dry rubbish" had been shot in the place of the excavated soil, De Crosne had the place paved, set up Jean Goujon's fountain in the centre, and gave it to the people as a vegetable market, which lasted till all the Halles were rebuilt, towards the beginning of the Second Empire. There is plenty of organic matter there still, despite De Crosne's clearance. Every time that fresh foundations have been dug, the workmen have turned up heaps of bones; but that must be expected, after the place had been the chief Paris graveyard for six centuries. The graveyard of the Innocents covered about eight thousand square yards (say an acre and three-quarters), and the neighbourhood about it was as densely peopled as that round Covent Garden.

Of course, in 1791, the graveyards, like other church property, were handed over to the State, with the cynical proviso that they must not be sold till ten years after the last interments. But soon Paris was to need burying-grounds, as urgently as if a terrible plague was devastating her. The Reign of Terror began. There were two guillotines "en permanence;" one at each end of the city; and close to them, to save trouble, they made two graveyards—one at the east end, near the Place du Trône; one at the west, close to the Place de la Concorde. In this latter, Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were buried. At the Restoration they dug and sifted the ground till they found, or fancied they found, the precious bones of the unhappy king and his wife; and on the spot where they were discovered stands the Chapelle Expiatoire, one of the sights of Paris, and, as I always thought, a very uncanny sight. We know who stepped out of the end window of King James's Whitehall banqueting-room, and many of us think it was wicked, as well as foolish, to cut his head off; but we have happily expunged from our Prayer-Book the service for the 29th January. When will the French do away with the idea of expiatory chapel, and just show the spot (if they don't prefer forgetting it altogether) merely as something worth seeing? The East-end guillotine-graveyard is still used; it is that Picpus cemetery which Victor Hugo describes so beautifully in the Misérables. A convent garden, that of "the Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration," stretches up from it to the street; and a few of the families who suffered in '93—the Noailles, the Lafayettes, &c.—have bought it and still bury there.

The other Paris burying-grounds have,

more or less, completely disappeared. Some are cut up by streets, others covered with public buildings; on the top of the huge mound, which covers the victims of the awful massacre of the 2nd September, 1792, there is a reservoir supplying that part of Paris with water.

Père la Chaise, we often fancy, dates from the time of the Grand Monarque, but we are wrong. The Père was Louis's confessor, when he became, in his old age, a drivelling devotee. It was he who secretly married the old king to the handsome creole, Françoise d'Aubigné de Maintenon, Scarron's penniless widow; but the land was not bought till the year eleven of the Républic (1803) by Frochot, the First Consul's prefect of the Seine; and it was first opened as a burying-ground in 1804. It took La Chaise's name because Louis gave it to his confessor in 1676, perhaps as a thank-offering for the wonderful success of the French fleet, which in that year thrice beat De Ruyter. From time immemorial, the slope, called Mont l'Évêque, had belonged to the archbishops of Paris. About 1550 they sold a piece of it to a rich grocer named Regnault, who built on it a country house, with a splendid view of Paris. This was called Regnault's Folly; and so it proved, for, before sixty years had gone by, the Jesuits had got hold of it, and used it for "going into retreat" in the summer months. In 1652, Louis XIV., then quite a lad, looked on from its windows at the street fight in which that great amazon of the Fronde, Mdlle. de Montpensier, helped Condé to drive off Turenne and the royalists, by turning on the latter the guns of the Bastille. The Jesuits, always ready to give a sprat to catch a herring, begged his Majesty to accept "that poor place of theirs," which had been consecrated by his august presence; and thenceforth Mont l'Évêque became Mont Louis. In Lister's journey to Paris (1698), he says: "I saw the palace or country house of Father Lachaise, the king's confessor. It is admirably situated, on a slope facing south, with fine woods on both sides. A fit dwelling for a contemplative mind."

The old part of Père la Chaise is still very beautiful. In spring-time it is full of violets, primroses, and budding trees; and, if some of the tombs are absurdly vulgar and others outrageously pretentious, you don't notice this amid the wealth of greenery which nature has flung about everywhere. As you wander along some of the shady walks, notably the Bosquet-Delille, as it is called, between the tomb of that blind translator of Milton and that of Talma, the great actor, you feel inclined to say, as Luther did in the graveyard at Worms: "Invideo quia quiescent." ("I envy them because they are at rest.")

All Père la Chaise is not equally picturesque. Posthumous vanity is much more offensive when the monument which bears witness to it is brand-new, with great gilt letters, than when it has begun to shale off with the frosts of many winters, and to gather from moss and lichen those hues which painters love. Pills and imitation jet, and things of that kind, are, to judge from the newest part of Père la Chaise, the surest passports to graveyard immortality. Ney is forgotten; his grave is nameless; just a little garden full of violets and heartsease, with a plain iron railing round—that is all that marks the last resting-place of "the bravest of the brave," Duke of Elchingen and Prince of Moskowa. Foy has a statue, but who cares for him? Even the "victims" of 1820 and those of '30—on whose tombs red-hot republicans used to stealthily scribble, "Death to the tyrant," "We will avenge thee," "Every Bourbon ought to end as Capet did," till the police were driven wild at not being able to find out who did it—have passed into obscurity. Béranger's tomb, hard by which is the tumble-down monument of Judith Lepère, his "Lisette," still attracts visitors. So, in far greater measure, does that of Abelard and Héloïse. You can scarcely miss the big Gothic tomb with the statues of the lovers, and you will be almost sure to see some young couples shyly standing hand-in-hand behind it, and swearing eternal affection. Strange that the Parisians of to-day should still be laying wreaths on the grave of a monk and nun of the twelfth century!

And here let me note a point on which we English do not do ourselves common justice. When a seat or a tree is carved all over with names, or a big shoe cut in the lead that roofs some cathedral tower, we say, "What savages the English lower orders are; you can't trust them with anything. Why, abroad now . . !" Abroad, my dear friend, it's just the same, or worse. When I first saw the Pantheon, the dome just over the top of the staircase was covered with names. How some of them were written I cannot imagine, unless the writers got on one another's backs, at terrible risk to life and limb, or (more prudently) tied an inch of charcoal to the end of a long walking-stick. So it is in every French public place where the sergent-de-ville can in any way be "dodged." It is so in Père la Chaise. Abelard's tomb is railed round, else it would be worn away piecemeal by patient carvers of pairs of names tied together by a true lover's knot, and adorned with two hearts spitted on the same arrow, and such like devices. Rachel's tomb is literally covered with the names of admirers of French tragedy. Inside the heavy Egyptian portal is quite a heap of wreaths, some quite fresh, and, fastened to one of these—a wreath in black and white glass beads—might lately be seen the card of a well-known tradesman, with the corner turned down, to show that he did not wish the visit returned!

Of course Rachel lies in the Jews' ground. There is also in Père la Chaise a Mohammedan cemetery. A sham mosque, where ablutions are performed, stands in the midst, and around are a few tombstones surmounted with turbans. But it is a gloomy, weedy spot; and the huge square monument of the poor queen of Oude, who died broken-hearted—because she found that her sister of England, to whom she came to cry for justice, instead of taking her to her bosom, or at least lodging her in a palace, did nothing for her, and let her live in poor apartments in Paddington—makes it look still gloomier.

I can't admire the style which the French call "architecture parlante," like that heap of rockwork with a telegraph atop, which is the burial-place of Chappe, the inventor of the old-fashioned telegraph which used to work before messages came to be flashed along the electric wires. There are plenty of such monuments in Père la Chaise; all, I think, in equally bad taste.

Since I first saw Père la Chaise, it has been the scene of the Communists' last struggle. Eight hundred and seventy-eight of them are buried close to the central avenue. Wolves at bay, they fought and fell there on that lovely May day; and who can say how many of them were, not rascals and ruffians, but enthusiasts really anxious to bring in the reign of righteousness and justice in this strange world, where so much seems to go amiss? They lie not far from the monument to the two generals, Thomas and Clement, with the murder of whom the Commune began, just as it ended with the killing of the archbishop and the other hostages. Poor France, how many memories of this kind she has, and how very bitterly all her rival parties remember them. You can't cure men of Communism by shooting down a third of them like mad dogs, sending another third to New Caledonia, and starving out the rest by keeping them under police surveillance. If you profess to be a paternal government (and all French Governments make that profession), your only way is to give them all "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work." If you decline to do that, you are bound to leave them free, so that they may be able to secure it for themselves.

Montmartre—near the big fort whose cannon thundered against Paris all through May, '71, so loudly that I heard it in the quiet little valley of Port Royal, far beyond Versailles—is the next biggest cemetery. Its condition is what we should call shamefully neglected. The lodge was once a low public-house-farm, where milk was sold in one room and wine in another. There was just one pretty bit—on the right-hand as you went in, where weeping-willows, and larches, and a splendid cypress, had grown as trees seldom grow near Paris. The tombs, it is true, were tumbling about in all directions, but they were overgrown with honeysuckle and clematis, and roses long untouched by the pruner. It was really a lovely little dell—a bit of nature amid the grim bareness of most of the cemetery. Nobody could touch it, for, by French law, a "concession perpétuelle" means what the words imply; and though generally of Mr. Haden's opinion, that to grant freehold burying-places is an absurdity, I was very sorry when this concession was surrendered. They found out the owner in America; he gave up his claim, and the sweet little dell was levelled and prepared for fresh graves, of which it now contains some half-dozen, each like the other; each with its stone border and its edging of half-dead box. Here, too, as well as at Père la Chaise, are sad records of May, 1871. Into a pit, a hundred yards long, were thrown nearly eight hundred soldiers of the Commune. The long mound looks strangely bare, for an old woman keeps it free from weeds, and has begun to plant flowers at one end. Every day, as soon as the gates are opened, she comes in (did in the spring of '74, at any rate), kneels down, and begins her weeding, or perhaps plants a few more flowers. If they let her go on she will turn the whole strip of ground into a brilliant border. I wish I could have screwed up courage, before I left Paris, to ask her a few questions. At any rate, it was comforting to learn from the "gardien" that (for a wonder) the authorities do not meddle with her.

Habitués of the Paris cemeteries have not always been so harmless. During the excitement of '48 there was a great deal of talk about a sort of French "spring-heeled Jack," who used to leap the walls, dig out the bodies, cut them up, and leave the pieces strewn about the grass, or hanging about the trees. Watch was kept, mastiffs were let loose, spring-guns were set; but it was not till after several months that Sergeant-Major Bertrand, who had gone into the hospital with a number of strange wounds in the back, was proved to be the "vampire." According to his account, it was a periodical madness which forced him to leap the cemetery walls, to tear out the bodies with his unhelped hands, and to dismember them. The dogs sneaked off when he walked straight up to them, which does not say much for French dogs; and it does not say much for the "gardiens" that he had never come across a living creature while he was at work. The spring-guns he had, till his last attempt, managed to scent out and render harmless. For days after his ghastly exploit the poor creature used to be bowed to the ground with bodily and mental exhaustion. He was imprisoned for a year (the Code does not, it seems, enforce a severer penalty for rifling a tomb), and they say he was quite cured, and became possibly a model non-commissioned officer.

Enough of Paris graveyards; there are plenty of them, all so full that, if cholera comes, the scenes of 1832 must needs be repeated. The people died in heaps, and the recklessness got to be so great that, when a hearse passed, the workmen, sitting drinking in the cabarets, would raise their glasses and shout, "Your good health, morbus."

Here again is something in which we are better than our neighbours: the approach to an English cemetery is generally decently quiet. In Paris, the rule is the other way. The long street to Père la Chaise, full of wreath-stalls and masons' yards, and thronged with touters anxious to sell a bunch of immortelles, is bad enough; but the road to the St. Ouen Cemetery, for instance, is far worse; hovels of every conceivable form, built of zinc, of old timber, of tarred canvas—anything that will shelter a man while he sips his wine or his absinthe; little gardens with swings and merry-go-rounds; skittle-alleys; all that we should judge most unseemly, crowded up to the very gates. But the French do not mind such trifles.

In one thing they must take a leaf out of our book. They must soon finish the Hausmann necropolis at Méry-sur-Oise. I wish it were on lower ground; for what Mr. Haden says about gradually raising swamps by steadily burying there is, I think, very practical. But it is sufficiently out of the way to give the Paris springs a chance of recovering their purity; and it is not, like Père la Chaise, in the line of new railroads. The mishap of February, '74, when the tunnel of the Paris "District Railway" fell in, and a score of bodies dropped through out of the most populous part of Père la Chaise, is never likely to be repeated at Méry-sur-Oise.

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM.

THERE is in London an exhibition so singularly controlled and managed that, although belonging to the nation, it is scarcely known to the public, and is as little talked about as the Christy Collection, which is also national property. When an institution is placed in the hands of trustees, men whose duties are almost nominal, and who are not paid for their services, it is difficult to get them to take much interest in the matter; they are recognised by the law, whenever law has to step in; but beyond this one hears little of them. Of the tens of thousands of country visitors and foreigners who are temporarily sojourning in the Metropolis, of the millions who are its regular inhabitants, how few are there who know that Lincoln's-inn-fields contains Sir John Soane's Museum, or that there is such a museum at all! And yet that museum belongs to us. One reason for this ignorance is that the institution is self-supporting, by being endowed; we are not taxed for its maintenance; it costs us nothing; there is no demand made on the House of Commons for a grant for its support; and therefore it does not go through such an ordeal of criticism as the British Museum, the South Kensington Museum, and the National Gallery. Still, it is worth considering whether an art-collection, which cost a very large sum of money to bring together, should not be made more instructive than it is, and a knowledge of it diffused over a wider sphere.

The late Sir John Soane, the architect,

was a man of somewhat peculiar character. His merits as an architect are matter of dispute; but he was successful in his profession, realised a large fortune, and survived to a good old age. The Bank of England is his best known work; the exterior is much admired for the skill with which architectural effect is given to what is, in effect, a windowless wall: especially the rich Corinthian of the north-west angle. His other works were not such as to give him a leading rank in the profession; although he had the merit, not always observable in his contemporaries and successors, of making his interiors convenient and well lighted.

At his residence in Lincoln's-inn-fields, Soane gradually collected choice works of art from all parts of the world, and disposed them in every room, passage, and staircase with great ingenuity. Whether the total value has ever been publicly stated we are not aware, but he gave two thousand guineas for one article alone—a splendid Egyptian sarcophagus of arragonite, brought to England by Belzoni. A biographer of Soane finds in the house and its contents something analogous to the peculiarities of the man himself. "The exterior of the house is by no means such a specimen of taste as an architect would be ambitious of bequeathing to posterity; though, taken all in all, the building and its contents form a monument sufficiently expressive of the character of the man—a strange jumble of insignificance and ostentation, of parsimony and extravagance, of ingenious contrivances in some parts and the most miserable conceits in others. Such as it is, however, it was for years his favourite amusement, even from the time he commenced it in 1812; and, as he seems to have grudged no cost in making repeated alterations, it is singular, more especially considering the purpose to which he ultimately destined it, that he should not have rebuilt the front, and that of the house on each side of it (also his own property), so as to have produced a uniform façade of tolerably imposing aspect; even had he not added these houses to his own residence and museum."

In 1833, when he had reached the eighty-first year of his age, Sir John Soane bequeathed his house and museum to the nation, with an endowment for maintaining it in perpetuity. In an Act of Parliament passed to give validity to this transfer (which was to take place after his decease), provision was made for the appointment of trustees. Three trustees were appointed for life—an architect, an artist, and a barrister; and to these were added five others, to be nominated from time to time by an equal number of public bodies, viz.—the Royal Academy, the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Society, the Society of Arts, and the Corporation of the City of London. The life-trustees were at a later period increased to four in number, but in other respects the trusteeship is based on the plan originally laid down. Sir John left thirty thousand pounds Three per Cent. Consols, to be held in the names of the trustees, and the annual dividends to be appropriated to the safe keeping and management of the property; to this was added the freehold houses on either side of the museum, the net rental from which was appropriated in a similar way.

When Soane died, in 1837, the trust came into operation. A curator of the museum was appointed at a salary of three hundred a year, and arrangements made for a scant admission of the public to see the contents. As these contents are almost exactly the same now, in 1875, as they were in 1837, and as nearly as may be in the same condition, we will take a cursory glance at them; and this we do the more readily, because we believe that only a very small proportion of the readers of ALL THE YEAR ROUND have ever seen the Soane Museum. The narrow restrictions placed upon the admission of the public we will speak about presently.

The plain frontage of the house, on the north side of Lincoln's-inn-fields, little prepares one for the multiplicity of apartments and divisions in the interior. It was in this that Sir John Soane showed one of his peculiarities of ingenuity; wherever a corner could be found to accommodate a work of art, a work of art was put into it. By screens and partial screens, bays and recesses, and other contrivances, he divided the larger spaces into small compartments, and gave a distinct name to each. Thus it is that we find the Entrance Hall, the Recess, the Staircase, the Dining Room, the Library, the Little Study, the Dressing Room, the Corridor, the Student's Room, the Picture Room, the Monk's Parlour, the Oratory, the Ante Room, the Catacombs, the Sepulchral Chamber, the Crypt, the Gallery, the Lobby, the Breakfast Room, the Shakespeare Recess, the South Drawing Room, the North Drawing Room, the Tivoli Recess, the Model Room, the Morning Room, &c.

So crowded are the contents, that a visitor forms but an inadequate conception of their real number. Of pictures alone there are enough to form an extensive gallery; and we may judge that their excellence and value are considerable when we find among the artists the names of Raffaelle, Canaletti, Piranesi, Watteau, Zuccherelli, Rubens, Ostade, Paul Veronese, Tintoretto, Ruysdael, and other representatives of the foreign schools of painting; while the English school has supplied paintings and drawings by Howard, Lawrence, Reynolds, Mortimer, Jackson, Calcott, Hogarth, Danby, Turner, Cosway, Fuseli, Thornhill, Ward, Westall, Owen, Stothard, Corbould, Eastlake, Daniel, Jones, Hilton, Sandby, &c. Among the pictures are Hogarth's famous set of four, "The Election," comprising the Entertainment, the Canvassing for Voters, the Polling, and the Chairing of the Members. These pictures were obtained cheaply from Hogarth by Garrick. Soane gave one thousand six hundred and fifty guineas for them, at the sale of the effects of Garrick's widow; but they would unquestionably obtain a much higher price now if sold at Christie and Manson's. Hogarth's set of eight, "The Rake's Progress," are also here; Soane bought them "for a song" seventy years ago; it would be a song to a very high tune that would suffice to purchase them now.

Sculpture is still more fully represented at this museum than painting: in the various forms of ancient statues, groups, and busts; casts from such works in plaster; modern works in marble; and clay models, such as the sculptor is in the habit of working from. In the placing of these numerous objects, Soane exhibited that ingenuity which has been displayed in so many other parts of the building, and which is more especially shown in the arrangement of the pictures. In one small room there are folding shutters, hung on each side with pictures; insomuch that, including those hung on the wall itself, there are twice as many pictures as could be accommodated in the ordinary mode of arrangement. There is an additional advantage in this: the visitor is enabled to view most of the pictures under different lights, by simply moving the shutters.

Fragments of ancient buildings, models to represent temples, &c., in their supposed state of completeness, and plaster casts of friezes, capitals, columns, and other architectural details, form another large and interesting department. The drawings and engravings, too, illustrative of such subjects, are very numerous.

Among various objects brought from Egypt is the magnificent sarcophagus, already briefly adverted to. When Belzoni was making his researches in the tombs of the Kings, near Thebes, he came to a chamber containing this elaborate work of ancient Egyptian art. It is called white alabaster, but is a kind of arragonite, translucent to the light of a candle. The sarcophagus is nine feet five inches long, three feet seven inches wide, and two inches thick. The whole surface, inside and out, is crowded with engraved or incised figures. There was a cover, but this had been ill-treated and shattered into many pieces. The discovery of the sarcophagus was a happy one; the history of its transport to Lincoln's-inn-fields was an adventurous one. Mr. Salt, who was appointed British Consul-General at Cairo in 1815, employed Belzoni to make the researches at Thebes, paid him, and considered the recovered or discovered antiquities to be his own property. Belzoni demurred, and claimed a part at any rate of the money value of this choice sarcophagus. The Russian, French, and Bavarian Governments all wished to obtain possession of it; but Salt and Belzoni, after coming to an agreement about ownership, brought this and other Egyptian antiquities to England, at the cost of much time, labour, and money. The articles were deposited provisionally in the British Museum. The trustees, after prolonged negotiation, declined to give the price—two thousand guineas—demanded by Mr. Salt, for the sarcophagus; whereupon Sir John Soane came to the rescue, purchased the treasure, and built a chamber for its reception in the basement of his house. The interior of the bottom of the sarcophagus has an engraved figure, probably of the distinguished personage whose coffin this had been; the spaces around the figure, and between the body and arms, are covered with incised inscriptions. The sides are divided into compartments, richly adorned with hieroglyphics, small and delicately formed.

One of the freaks of Sir John Soane, considered by most men of artistic taste to be puerile, is a sort of imitative monastery en petite. Wishing to produce, within a small space, the various contrasting effects of ecclesiastical architecture, he imagined the life of a monk, and provided him with a monastic cell, oratory, and grave. He imagined the monk, "Padre Giovanni," to be refined rather than ascetic; he built for him a parlour lighted with a window of stained glass, through which can be seen the ruins of a monastery, together with the padre's cell, oratory, and grave. In the cell is a niche for holy water; in the oratory is a highly-wrought carved crucifix; and there are also missals, relics, stained-glass pictures of sacred subjects, and models of ecclesiastical buildings. The tomb of the supposed monk is made with the fragments of an old monument, once placed over a family vault in an Essex churchyard. In short, to use Sir John's own description, throughout the realisation of this mediæval conception "attention has been given to every minute circumstance."

The oddity of the conception becomes all the more manifest when we associate it with the locality selected—a back room or two in a dwelling-house in Lincoln's-inn-fields! There are, however, in the museum abundant examples of art in which no theatrical mimicry whatever is attempted: sterling specimens which interest the artist, the art-critic, and intelligent observers generally. One case contains a series of Napoleon medals: bronze medals engraved and struck by order of the first Napoleon, mostly to celebrate his victories; they are of a high order of merit, besides possessing an historical interest.

Such, in brief, is Sir John Soane's Museum; and now for a few remarks on the singularly scanty degree to which admission is obtainable.

Soane is himself mainly responsible for this scantiness. In the Act of Parliament which he obtained in 1833, and which was drawn up under his instructions, it is declared that, "Free access shall be given at least on two days in every week throughout the months of April, May, and June, and at such other times in the same or in any other months as the said trustees shall direct, to amateurs and students in painting, sculpture, and architecture, and to such other persons as shall apply for and obtain admission thereto, at such hours and in such manner, and under such regulations for consulting, inspecting, and benefiting by the said collection, as the said Sir John Soane shall have established previous to his decease, or as the said trustees shall establish relating thereto." It is true that the trustees are here empowered to increase the facilities for admission if they so choose; but it is also true that they are not compelled to do so: twenty-six days out of the three hundred and sixty-five in each year—this is all that was "written in the bond." Even a quarter of a century after the museum had been opened to the public, the difficulty of obtaining admission was considerable, although an increase had been made in the number of days. The following were the rules:—"Any person desirous of obtaining admission to the museum can apply either to a trustee, by letter to the curator, or personally at the museum a day or two before he may desire to visit it. In the latter case, the applicant is expected to leave a card, containing the name and address of the party desiring admission, and the number of persons proposed to be introduced; or the same can be entered in a book kept for the purpose in the hall, when, unless there appears to the curator any satisfactory reason to the contrary, a card of admission for the next open day is forwarded by post to the given address." At the present time the formality of obtaining a card beforehand is dispensed with. The museum is open three days a week during three months, two days a week during four months, and closed altogether during the remaining five months of the year. The total number of days in which the public can view the collection is thus seventy-three. Doubtless the trustees have some good reason to assign for shutting out the public altogether from the end of August to the beginning of February, but this reason is not very apparent.

We are almost in the dark concerning the number of visitors to the museum. The House of Commons, as we have said, not being asked for money to maintain it, seldom pays any attention to it. The latest return we have seen mentions a total of about two thousand visitors, on fifty-six days of one year, averaging only thirty-eight per day; but this was several years back, and we imagine that the figures must be more favourable now. The endowment, about a thousand a year, is made to cover the expenditure, with a small margin laid by for contingencies.

One fact must be borne in mind, in justice alike to trustees and curators, viz., that a large number of visitors at one time could not possibly be accommodated. The rooms are numerous, but they are small, and so crowded with works of art that passage way is extremely limited, and careful supervision needed. All we wish to convey in the way of suggestion is, that the days of admission should be a little more than two or three in a week, and the months of admission more than seven in a year. Art-students, and persons specially introduced, can, we believe, obtain admission at other times; but we are speaking of the public generally—the vast mass of sober folk who are always glad to avail themselves of opportunities for seeing instructive galleries and museums, art treasures which tell of other ages and other lands, as well as our own. There is no golden road leading to culture any more than to erudition; the one as well as the other must be wrought out by degrees. If "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever," then an exhibition in which articles of beauty take part must have a refining influence in the end.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

"No doubt of it," roars Tom Rollingstone, snugly ensconced in the smoking-room of a West-end club. "Why, when I was out in the States, in Hermit's year, one of our English fellows nearly murdered an Italian to that text. You see, the organ-grinding beggar was playing that very tune just as poor Rakeleigh—who went to grief over Marksman—was passing by. The unlucky child hadn't a blessed shin-plaster in his pocket, and had been sleeping for the last two nights in the Third Avenue cars. So, when he heard old 'povero Italiano' grinding away at 'Home, Sweet Home!' he yelled, 'What does the scoundrel mean by playing "Home, Sweet Home!" in this infernal country?' and put in his left, sending the organ flying one way and the artist the other. Serve the beggar right for playing the right tune in the wrong place, but the sentiment's sound enough. 'No place like home,'" and Tom lights a fresh "weed" and is happy.

Mr. Rollingstone's attachment for home, albeit loudly proclaimed, might be defined as rather theoretical than practical—as the thin fibre of sentiment running through an existence of "rough and tumble." Perhaps now and then in the course of his chequered life — during the long quiet smoke on the Atlantic steamer, leaving her track behind her gradually fading out, like the uncertain trace of a purposeless existence; in the long hours of a trans-continental railway trip; in the stuffy interior of a Highland bothy; in the quiet dreamy hour enjoyed in a hammock under a verandah in the sunny South; in the course of a quiet paddle among the islands of the Lago Maggiore; and during that silent walk from the old Pandemonium at Baden up the Lichtenthaler Allée—he has thought of the dear old rectory, the white-haired father, the great mound of hollyhocks, the Lieder ohne worte streaming through the windows, the slow old pony and the dear old dog who once welcomed him to a home where now there is nothing but a railway station; but if so, these thoughts enter no longer into his ideal, which simply includes the favourite pursuits, the clubs and the cronies, which together make up his home of to-day.

Far nearer the true mark is McTartar: "Glad to get back again. Deuced glad to get to work again;" to have somebody to worry he means. "Detest holidays. Throw one out of gear. Come back to the office and find everything wrong. One confounded fellow on sick-leave, another away for a couple of months. Take one Heaven knows how long to get things straight. Been abroad, of course. Wife and daughters mad on sight-seeing. A nice holiday I have had: scurrying about everywhere, seeing all the old things over again. I can't tell you how many cathedrals I have been worried over; and as for pictures, I hate the sight of them. Never detested architecture as I do at this moment. Dragged, sir! Keel-hauled I have been over filthy towns, to see all sorts of tumble-down dens! Nice fourteenth century bits they call them, carefully planted round with pointed stones, warranted to make you feel them through any boot. Food! Nothing to eat, sir; nothing. Soup! Horrible stuff! Give me my plain gravy or simple mulligatawny at home. At home;" and McTartar jumps into a Hansom cab and is gone. In his generation McTartar is right. In his ordinary life he is somebody—that is the main point with him. He entered the Civil Service early, and has achieved position therein. When at home he enjoys a certain amount of respect. He gives good dinners, in a heavy sort of way, to dignified but dull guests. The joints are undeniable, and the game is excellently cooked. His wine is—well—is fair, and his welcome is hearty. He is one of those men who show pretty well with the best side outwards. I would rather not know the seamy side of McTartar.

It is curiously characteristic of Englishmen that, on no evidence whatever, they assert, first, that an Englishman's house is his castle; and, secondly, that no foreign language contains an equivalent for our word "home." These statements are not true, although, perhaps, they contain as much truth as the patriotic outpourings of other nations. An Englishman's house is, in point of fact, very little of a castle, if by that term be meant a stronghold from which he can defy all comers. Mr. Bull's house, even if it be his own freehold, will not protect him, as a castle would once have done, against the law. Without quoting the tremendous mandamus of the now extinct Court of Queen's Bench, against which neither palace, priory, nor castle was proof, it is easy to cite abundant instances of the non-castellar character of Mr. Bull's residence. It will not protect him against ordinary legal process, nor will it shelter him from health officers, and other guardians of the public welfare. It is not proof against letters and telegrams, barrel-organs, and that proverbial person next door who always plays the piano badly. It is not proof against the cook's cousin, nor Mary Jane's young man, nor policeman X, and these friends of the castellan's faithful retainers take very good care that the privacy which he treasures so highly shall not be too strictly preserved. He may rest assured that the neighbours, or at least their domestics, are as well acquainted with the events of his home life, as if he lived in a glass castle with telescopes constantly pointed at it from the four quarters of the compass. There may be gloom, but there can be no secrecy in his donjon. His oubliettes are vain contrivances, for he can neither breathe nor move but the eye of the watchful retainer is upon him. He may be sure that all the little squabbles and troubles of his domestic life are properly observed, and duly commented on. Does he dream that his eldest son's return from college—plucked—was not known half over the parish before forty-eight hours were over; or that the terrible scene, when the extent of Master Tom's debts was discovered, and that gay young spark had "only his mother to thank" that he was not turned out of doors and disinherited then and there—was not talked over, and almost re-enacted, in many neighbouring kitchens and housekeepers' rooms? Does he for a moment imagine that John, and Susan, and the rest of them, are not acquainted with the minutest particulars of the match being broken off between his daughter and young Chillingham, who behaved so badly? Is he credulous enough to believe that the servant who tells him a "party is waitin' in the 'all," does not know that the said "party" in the greasy hat and the shapeless boots—who exhales horrible odours of gin, tobacco, and onions, and, worse than these, the indescribable smell of poverty and dirt—is that black-sheep his own cousin, Alexander St. George Dashington Bull, Esquire, once of Oxley Park, &c. &c., and now of Buggy's Rents, Holborn? Is he not certain that when "that party" takes himself off, his visit will be plentifully discussed among the retainers, who "pity the poor guv'nor, who is quite the gentleman, and does things handsomely for Mr. St. George, but can't keep him out of the house, do what he will?" Worse than this; were not all the features of that last attack — a mere nothing of course, but suspiciously like a touch of paralysis—duly commented on with shaking heads and mutterings that the "guv'nor had had a warning?" and were not speculations indulged in as to the prospects of the family when the "guv'nor," who had always "lived up to his income," should be carried off, "which the nex' fit will be the third?" We may rest assured that all these things are done in the ordinary course of work and gossip, and that as for our particular skeleton hidden away in the deepest oubliette, it is even as a specimen at the Museum of the College of Surgeons to our devoted followers. They know every bone in its framework. Mrs. Gillyflower—that old and faithful housekeeper — knows exactly how Mrs. Bull "took on" when it was first introduced into the family; while Mr. Binsby knows how much it took to "square it;" and, when telling the story—Binsby has a pleasant, humorous way with him—indicates the nature of the difficulty by pretending to write a name on a piece of paper. Verily we live in transparent bee-hives, not in castles, by any means.

When we abuse foreigners for not knowing what "home" means, we do them the greatest injustice. Frenchmen are accused of being notorious flâneurs and gadders about, but if mutual affection among the members of a family, and a pleasure in meeting together, have anything to do with the home instinct, French folks are as fond of home as the bluffest Englishman of us all. To the British mind it is absurd that a mother-in-law should be allowed to reside under the same roof with a newly-married couple; but nothing is more common in France. It is true that the despised foreigner is at home wherever his family and friends are round him, and is, perhaps, less imbued with the "castle" idea than John Bull. If I were not afraid of outraging British susceptibilities, I would quote at greater length my friend Professor Wurstlieber, who holds forth somewhat in this wise: "The imaginary so-called home-love of the English shines forth to me rather as a hearth instinct, not un-catlike, for meeting in a certain spot rather than for meeting certain people. The German makes his home where he and the beloved ones are. In Whitechapel or in Cincinnati he eats his sausage, his black bread, drinks his lager-bier, listens to his music, and smokes his kanaster over all — as the Englander eats beef, drinks schnapps, and plays at cricket in heat and cold. Strong nations make the country they live in England or Germany, as the immigrants are English or Germans. Weak peoples become absorbed. Of all home-loving nations the Swiss are the most logical. They go into the world, make money in strange countries, and come back to their valleys to die. Your talk of understanding home better than other people is simply chatter. Your law of primogeniture makes you to hate one another. Your boasted home-love is house-love. It always rains out of doors, therefore you love the warmth of the fireside you are always trying to be sentimental about." Thus far Herr Wurstlieber, who, since recent victories, is not quite so respectful in his treatment of English people as of old; but whether his analysis be scientifically accurate or not, the fact remains that our English folk cling to their curiously composite and varied idea of home, of home-work, and home-pleasures, and just at this present season a large number of our fellow-countrymen are hugging themselves with delight at getting back to their own roof-tree. Perhaps the most of them work, like McTartar, much too hard at holiday-making, and make a Continental tour rather a penitential pilgrimage than a pleasant trip, by trying to do too much, while others become during the Long Vacation inexpressibly weary of the seaside, of the monotony of sand and sea, cliff and sky; but, whatever the cause may be, there is no doubt about the effect. Towards the end of their holidays all look forward with pleasure to the return home. Hard-worked doctors and earnest divines; eager, ambitious lawyers; and strenuous men of business, all rejoice at the prospect of getting home and to regular work once more. With experienced masters and mistresses of households this joy at returning to good food, a well-kept house, and the regular routine of duty, is tempered by certain well-founded anxieties. Unless paterfamilias be living well within his means, his return will be greeted by an accumulation of testimonials in the shape of tradesmen's bills—responsibilities which, in the hurry of departure and the necessity for "cash in hand," he has probably found it convenient to overlook for a time, but with which, on his return home, he must grapple to the best of his ability. School-bills, also, must be settled before boys and girls can be shipped off for the last term of the year. The olive branches, too, are, after a long holiday, pretty well stripped of their bark, and require entirely fresh covering before they can be sent anew to Birchington College. Besides these urgent causes of outlay are those for whitewashing, painting, and otherwise furbishing up the family castle, coupled with doubts as to the perfection of work done while the master's eye is far away. All these anxieties press upon the mind and the exchequer of the castellan, but what shall be said of the thousand-and-one doubts which alarm his wife. Have those troublesome workpeople attended to the voluminous directions left for them? Have they stripped off the old paper before putting on the new, or have they merely covered over the old in a slip-shod common way? Have the bells been made to ring, and the chimneys to cease from smoking? Has the gardener done his duty by the plants, or is the garden in a wofully unkempt condition? Have the carpets been properly cleansed and smoothly put down again? Has the piano suffered much from the festive gatherings of the faithful retainers left in charge? Materfamilias knows too well that there have been high jinks during her absence, and is only in doubt as to the precise amount of damage. Mary Jane and "Ameliarann" have, of course, entertained their friends in a manner creditable to the spirit and elegant taste of those young ladies, if not precisely to the edification of the Rev. Boanerges Bellows next door, who, having exchanged chapels with a friend, has enjoyed his holiday in town during the off season in a fashion becoming a clergyman blessed with nine children, some of whom are always ill. "Ill, of course they are," says Tom Rollingstone, who, having once studied medicine (unsuccessfully), has considered himself an authority on sanitary subjects ever since, and keeps the bills of mortality and Dr. Farr's reports on his table, to convey an illusory impression that he is given to the severer branches of study. "Out of nine, one, of course, must always have something the matter with it. Law of averages, you know! Let your family only be big enough, and the doctor's bill is a simple calculation. Like to hear fellows talk about their quiver being full! Sure to be something the matter with some of the arrows—not sharp enough, or ruffled in the feathers, eh? By-the-by—to carry out the metaphor—who is the bow, and who is the bowstring in that connection?" And, lost in a cloud of thought and tobacco, Tom's bearded countenance disappears from view. The howling of the little Bellows is of course unheeded by their fond parents, but these worthy persons will hardly fail to let Mrs. Bull know of the "goings on" in her absence; of the gorgeous raiment displayed weekdays and Sundays by her handmaidens; of the supplies of meat brought in by the butcher's young man, and the lengthy and pleasant conversations carried on between him and Amelia Ann; of the absence of the retainers from divine service on Sundays; and, worse than this, of the sound of Mrs. Bull's grand piano discoursing profane music on the Sabbath, the said sounds being sometimes accompanied by a stamping and shaking movement, indicative of saltatory "practising." The party given in honour of Mrs. Bull's absence was "really quite stylish," says Miss Deborah Bellows, first of the nine before mentioned. "None of the company came on foot, and the dresses—one must peep, you know—were the richest that money could buy. I am sure cook's black corded silk would have stood alone, and the display of lace was splendid."

"Singing, and dancing, and thumping the poor pianoforte all night," is the phrase used in lieu of "the festivities were prolonged to a late hour," and the heart of Mrs. Bull waxes faint within her, as she runs her fingers over the keys of the "grand" so unfortunately left open in the hurry of departure. This is not all. "I am afraid, my dear," begins the partner of Bull's fortunes, "that the servants are not satisfied with the presents we brought home for them. Mary Jane courtesied suspiciously low—a sort of sarcastic courtesy, I am sure—and I thought I detected an incipient sniff on Amelia Ann's classical features. Cook, I feel certain, is dissatisfied, and thinks greater distinction ought to have been made between her and the other servants." "No doubt, my dear," adds Mr. Bull, "cook thinks herself entitled to a 'Benjamin's mess,' but if she is disappointed, let her go. That woman always spoils the fish, and forgets the liver with the cod's head and shoulders." "Too true, my love," pleads his better half, "but she is very clever at soups and little dishes for the children. I don't know what I should have done without her when they were all ill in the spring. And then, suppose the others go too, just as I have trained them to be of some little use." "Never mind," barks out the father of the family, cheerfully—he has had a satisfactory five minutes with his banker on the way—"let them all go. Let us start fair. New brooms, you know, Mrs. Bull, eh?" "Yes, indeed, new brooms—if we could only be like the man in grandpapa's anecdote, and steal them ready made—but I have to make my brooms myself." "Very well, dear," assents Bull, "don't worry yourself. They'll shake down again fast enough. By-the-way, what is there for dinner?" "Only some soup and a joint. You see we took cook rather by surprise at the last moment." "Could not be better. We have not had a bit of dinner comfortably together for months; we will have a glass of the old Madeira to celebrate the occasion. How pleasant the fire looks, and how the rain is coming down outside! No place like home, my dear, after all!"

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLI.

The discovery of Minnie Bodkin's note, in Algernon's secretaire at the office, had incited Castalia to make some other attempts to pry into that depository of her husband's papers. She made excuses to step into the Post-office, whenever she had any reason for thinking Algernon was absent. Sometimes it was with the pretence of wishing to see him, sometimes on the plea of wanting to rest. She had learned that her husband frequently went into the Blue Bell, to have luncheon, in the middle of the day; and that, from one cause or another, the Whitford Post-office was not really honoured with so much of his personal superintendence, as she had been led to suppose. And this again was a fertile source of self-tormenting. Where was he, when he was not at the office?

It whetted her suspicious curiosity to find the secretaire always carefully locked, ever since her discovery of Miss Bodkin's note there. She now wished that she had searched it thoroughly when she had the opportunity, instead of hastening off to Dr. Bodkin's house, after having read the first letter she came upon. But her feelings at that time had been very different from what they now were. She had been nettled, truly, and jealous of any private consultation between Minnie Bodkin and her husband; hating to think that he could trust, and be confidential with, another woman than herself, but not distinctly suspecting either Minnie or Algernon of any intent to wrong her. Miss Bodkin loved power, and influence, and admiration, and Castalia wished no woman to influence Algernon, or to be admired by him for any qualities whatsoever, except herself; but all her little envious resentments against Minnie had been mere pin-pricks, compared with the cruel pangs of jealousy that now pierced her heart, when she thought of Rhoda Maxfield.

That secretaire! It seemed to have an irresistible attraction for her thoughts. She even dreamt sometimes of trying to open it, and finding fresh fastenings arise more and more complicated, as she succeeded in undoing one lock after the other. It was not Algernon's habit to lock up anything belonging to him. There must be some special reason for his doing so in this case! And to Castalia's jaundiced mind it seemed that the special reason could only be a desire to keep his letters secret from her. She grew day by day more restless. The servants at Ivy Lodge remarked with wonder their mistress's frequent absences from home. She, who had so dreaded and disliked walking, was now constantly to be seen on the road to the town, or on the meadow-path by the river. This kind of exercise, however, merely fatigued without refreshing her, and she became so lean and haggard, and her eyes had such a feverish glitter, that her looks might have alarmed anyone who loved her, and witnessed the change in her.

"There she goes again!" exclaimed Lydia to her fellow-servant, as she watched her mistress down the garden-path, behind the house, one afternoon. "She can't bide at home for an hour together now!"

"She wears herself to the bone," said Polly, shaking her head.

"She wears other folks to the bone, and that's worse," returned the pitiless Lydia.

Meanwhile Castalia had passed out of the little wicket-gate of her garden into the fields, and so along the meadow-path towards Whitford. She made her way along the path resolutely, though with a languid step. The ground was hardened by recent frost, and the usually muddy track was dry. At the corner of the Grammar School playground she turned up the lane towards the High-street, keeping close to the wall of the Grammar School, so as to be out of view from any of the side windows. Before she quite reached the High-street she caught sight of Mr. Diamond, walking briskly along in the direction of his lodgings. He did not see Castalia, or did not choose to see her; for, although she had once or twice saluted him in the street, she had on another occasion regarded him with her most unrecognising stare, and Matthew Diamond was not a man to risk enduring that a second time. But Castalia quickened her step so as to intercept him before he crossed the end of Grammar School-lane.

"Mr. Diamond!" she said, almost out of breath.

"Madam!"

Diamond raised his hat and stood still, in some surprise.

"Would you be kind enough—do you happen to know whether Mr. Errington has left the Post-office? You must have passed the door. You might have seen him coming out."

"I am sorry, madam, that I cannot inform you."

"You—you haven't seen him anywhere in the town?"

"No; I have only just left the Grammar School. Have you any further commands?"

He asked the question after a slight pause, because Castalia remained standing exactly across his path, glancing anxiously up and down the High-street, and apparently oblivious of Diamond's existence.

"Oh no! I beg your pardon," she answered, moving aside. As she did so, young Ingleby came up, and was about to pass them, when Diamond touched him on the shoulder and said, "Ingleby, have you chanced to see Mr. Errington?"

"Yes, sir; I saw him going down the High-street, not two minutes ago, close to old Maxfield's shop. Do you want him, Mrs. Errington? I can easily catch him if I run."

"No, no, no! Don't go! You must not go after him."

She walked away without any word or sign of farewell, leaving Diamond and the boy looking after her in surprise.

"That is the most disagreeable woman I ever came across!" exclaimed Ingleby, with school-boy frankness. "I hate her stuck-up airs. But Errington is such a capital fellow——! I'd do anything for him."

Diamond did not choose to discuss either the husband or the wife with young Ingleby, but he said to himself, as he pursued his homeward way, that Mrs. Errington's manner had been not only disagreeable but very strange.

Castalia reached the office and walked in. She entered the inner part that was screened off from the public, and passed Mr. Gibbs, behind his desk, without any recognition. She was about to enter Algernon's private room at the back, when Gibbs, rising and bowing, said "Did you want anything, ma'am? Mr. Errington is not there."

"Oh! I'll go in and sit down."

Gibbs looked uneasy and doubtful, and presently made an excuse to follow her into the room. Her frequent visits to the office of late by no means pleased Mr. Obadiah Gibbs.

"I didn't know how the fire was," said he, poking at the hot coals, and looking furtively at Mrs. Errington.

She was seated in her husband's chair in front of his desk. The little secretaire stood on a table at one side of it.

"I'm afraid Mr. Errington may not be back very soon," said Gibbs.

"Do you know where he's gone?"

"Not I, ma'am."

"Does he often go away during business hours?"

"Why—I don't know what you would call 'often,' ma'am—I crave pardon, I must attend to the office now; there is some one there." And Mr. Gibbs withdrew, leaving the door half open.

Castalia shut it, and fastened it inside. Then she pulled out a bunch of keys from her pocket, and tried them, one after the other, on the lock of the secretaire. This time it was safely secured, and not one of her keys fitted it. Then she opened the drawer of the table, and examined its contents. They consisted of papers, some printed, some written, a pair of driving gloves, and the cover of a letter directed to Algernon Errington, Esquire, in a woman's hand. Castalia pounced on the cover, and thrust it into her pocket. After that, she looked behind the almanac on the chimney-piece, and rummaged amongst a litter of newspapers, and torn scraps of writing that lay in a basket. She was thus engaged when Mr. Gibbs's hand was laid on the handle of the door, and Mr. Gibbs's voice was heard demanding admission.

Castalia opened the door at once, and Mr. Gibbs came in with a look of unconcealed annoyance on his face. He looked round the room sharply.

"What do you want?" asked Castalia.

"I want to see that all's right here, ma'am. I'm responsible."

"What should be wrong? What do you mean?" she demanded with so coldly-haughty an air, that Gibbs was abashed. He felt he had gone too far, and muttered an apology. "I wanted to see to the fire. I'm afraid the coal-box is nearly empty. That old woman is so careless. I beg your pardon, but Mr. Errington is very particular about the room being kept warm."

Castalia deigned not to notice him or his speech. She drew her shawl round her shoulders, and began to move away.

"Can I give any message for you to Mr. Errington, ma'am?"

"No——you need not mention that I came. I shall tell him myself this evening."

As she walked down the High-street she reflected on Mr. Gibbs's unwonted rudeness of look and manner.

"He is told to watch me; to drive me away if possible; to prevent me making any discoveries. I daresay they are all in a league together. I am the poor dupe of a wife—the stranger who knows nothing, and is to know nothing. We shall see; we shall see. I wonder where Ancram can have gone! That boy spoke of seeing him near Maxfield's house."

At that moment she found herself close to it, and with a sudden impulse she entered the shop, and, walking up to a man who stood behind the counter, said, "Is Mr. Errington here?"

The man was James Maxfield, and he answered sulkily, "I don't know whether he's gone or not. You'd better inquire at the private door."

Castalia's heart gave a great throb. "He has been here, then?" she said.

"You'd better inquire at the private door" was all James's response, delivered still more surlily than before.

Castalia left the shop, and knocked at the door indicated to her by James's thumb jerked over his shoulder. "Is Mr. Errington gone?" she asked of the girl who opened the door.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Did he—did he stay long?"

"About half an hour, I think."

"Is Mr. Maxfield at home?"

"No, ma'am; master is at Duckwell, and has been since Saturday."

"Who is it, Sally?" cried Betty Grimshaw's voice from the parlour, and upon hearing it Castalia walked hastily away.

When she reached her own home again, between fatigue and excitement she could scarcely stand. She threw herself on the sofa in her little drawing-room, unable to mount the stairs.

"Deary me, missus," cried Polly, who happened to admit her, "why you're a'most dead! Wherever have you been?"

"I've been walking in the fields. I came round by the road. I'm very tired."

"Tired? Nay, and well you may be if you took all that round! I thought you'd happen been into Whitford. Lawk, how you're squashing your bonnet! Let me take it off for you."

"I don't care; leave it alone."

But Polly would not endure to see "good clothes ruinated," as she said, so she removed her mistress's shawl and bonnet — folding, and smoothing, and straightening them as well as she could. "Now you'd better take a drop o' wine," she said. "You're a'most green. I niver saw such a colour."

Despite her rustic bluntness, Polly was kind in her way. She made her mistress swallow some wine, and put her slippers on her feet for her, and brought a pillow to place beneath her head. "You see you han't got no strength to spare. You're very weak, missus," she said. Then she muttered as she walked away, "Lord, I wouldn't care to be a lady myself! I think they're mostly poor creeturs."

Left alone, Castalia closed her eyes and tried to review the situation, but at first her brain would do nothing but represent to her over and over again certain scenes and circumstances, with a great gap here and there, like a broken kaleidoscope.

Ancram had been to Maxfield's house, and it could not have been to see the old man, who had been absent for some days. Perhaps Ancram was in the habit of going thither! He had never said a word to her about it. How sly he had been! How sly Rhoda had been! All his pretended unwillingness to have Rhoda invited to Ivy Lodge had been a blind. There was nothing clear or definite in her mind, except a bitter, burning, jealous hatred of Rhoda.

"We shall see if Ancram confesses to having been to that house to-day," said Castalia to herself. Then she went upstairs wearily. She was physically tired, being weak and utterly unused to much walking, and called Lydia to dress her and brush her hair. And when her toilet was completed, she sat quite still in the drawing-room, neither playing, reading, nor working — quite still, with her hands folded before her, and awaited her husband.

She would first try to lead him to confess his visit to the Maxfields, and, if that failed, would boldly tax him with it. She even went over the very words she would say to her husband when he should descend from his dressing-room before dinner.

But she could not foresee a circumstance which disturbed the plan she had arranged in her mind. When Algernon returned to Ivy Lodge he did not go into his dressing-room as usual, but marched straight into the drawing-room, where Castalia was sitting.

"That's an agreeable sort of letter!" he said, flinging one down on the table.

He was not in a passion—he had never been known to be in a passion—but he was evidently much vexed. His mouth was curved into a satirical smile; he drew his breath between his teeth with a hissing sound, and nodded his head twice or thrice, after repeating ironically, "That's an uncommonly agreeable sort of letter!" Then he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, threw himself into an easy-chair, stretched his legs straight out before him, and looked at his wife.

Castalia was surprised, and curious, and a little anxious, but she made an effort to carry out her programme despite this unexpected beginning. She remained motionless on the sofa, and said, with elaborate indifference of manner, "Do you wish me to read the letter? I wonder at your allowing me to know anything of your affairs."

"Read it? Of course! Why else did I give it you? Don't be absurd, Castalia. Pshaw!" And he impatiently changed the position of his feet with a sharp, sudden movement.

Castalia's sympathy with his evident annoyance overcame her resentment for the moment. She could not bear to see him troubled. She opened the letter.

"Why it's from Uncle Val!" she exclaimed.

It was from her uncle, addressed to her husband, and was written in a tone of considerable severity. To Castalia it appeared barbarously cruel. Lord Seely curtly refused any money assistance; and stated that he wrote to Algernon instead of to Castalia, because he perceived that, although the application for money had been written by Castalia's hand, it had not been dictated by her head. Lord Seely further advised his niece's husband, in the strongest and plainest terms, to use every method of economy, to retrench his expenditure, to refrain from superfluous luxuries, and to live on his salary.

"The little allowance I give Castalia for her dress will be continued to her," wrote his lordship. "Beyond that, I am unable to give either her, or you, one farthing. Understand this, and act on it. And, moreover, I had better tell you at once, as an additional inducement to be prudent, that I see no prospect of procuring advancement for you, in any other department of his Majesty's service than the one you are in at present. My advice to you is to endeavour to merit advancement by diligence in the performance of your duties. You have abilities which are sure to serve you, if honestly applied. You are so young, that even after ten or fifteen years' work you would be in the prime of all your faculties and powers. And ten or fifteen years' good work might give you an excellent position. As to Castalia, I cannot help feeling a conviction that her discontent is chiefly reflected, and that if she saw you cheerful and active in your daily business, she would not repine at her lot."

Castalia put the letter down on the table in silence. She was astonished, indignant; but yet a little gleam of satisfaction pierced through those feelings—a hope that she and her husband might be drawn closer together by this common trouble. She would show him how well able she was to endure this, and worse, if he would only love her and trust her entirely. Even her jealousy for Rhoda Maxfield was mitigated for the moment. All that fair-weather prettiness and philandering would be put out of sight at the first growl of a storm. The wife would be the nearest to him if troubles came. No pink-and-white coquetry could usurp her right to suffer with him and for him, at all events.

"That's a pleasant sort of thing, isn't it?" said Algernon, who had been watching her face as she read.

"It is too bad of Uncle Val, Ancram."

"Too bad! Yes; to put it mildly, it is too bad, I think. Too bad? By George, I never heard of anything so outrageous!"

"Do you know, I think that my lady is at the bottom of it."

"I wish she was at the bottom of the Thames!"

"Ancram, I do feel sorry for you. It is such a shame to bury your talents, and all that. But still, you know, it is true what he says about your having plenty of time before you. And as to being poor—of course it is horrid to be poor, but we can bear it, I daresay. And, really, I don't think I should mind it so much if once we were acknowledged to be quite, quite poor; because then it wouldn't matter what one wore, and nobody would expect one to have things like other people of one's rank."

Poor Castalia was not eloquent, but had she possessed the most fluent and persuasive tongue in the world, it would not have availed to make Algernon acquiesce in her view of the situation. She was for indignantly breaking off all connection with relatives who could behave as Uncle Val had behaved. It was not his refusing to advance more money (in her conscience Castalia did not believe he could afford much assistance of that kind), but his writing with such cruel coldness to Ancram—his declaring that Ancram's case was not a hard one—his lecturing about duties, and cheerful activity, and so on, just as if Ancram had been an ordinary plodding young man instead of a being exceptionally gifted with all sorts of shining qualities—these were offences not to be forgiven. Castalia, for her part, would have endured any privation, rather than beg more favours of Uncle Val and my lady.

But Algernon's feeling in the matter was by no means the same as Castalia's. He dismissed all her attempts to express her willingness to share his lot, for good or ill, as matters of no importance. She might find it easy enough. Yes; the chief burthen would not fall on her! And, besides, she did not at all realise what it would be to have to live on the salary of the postmaster of Whitford, and to practise "rigid economy," as my lord phrased it. It was really provoking to see the cool way in which she took it for granted that matters would be mended by their being "acknowledged to be quite, quite poor." "My dear Castalia," he said, with an air of superior tolerance, "you have about as much comprehension of the actual state of the case as a canary-bird."

She paused, silently looking at him for a moment. Then she drew nearer to him, and laid her arm round his shoulder. She wore a dinner-dress with loose hanging sleeves, which were not becoming to her wasted frame. But the poor thin arm clung with a loving touch to her husband, as she said, "I know I am not so clever as you, Ancram, but I can see and understand that if we haven't money enough to pay for things we must do without them." Castalia advanced this in the tone of one stating a self-evident proposition. "And I shan't care, Ancram, if you trust me, and—and—don't put any one else before me. I never put any one before you. I was fond of Uncle Val. I think he was the only person I really loved in the world before I saw you. But if he treats you badly I shall give him up."

Algernon shook off the clinging arm from his shoulder, not roughly, but slightingly.

"What on earth are you talking about, Cassy? What do you suppose we are to do? I tell you I must have some money, and you must write to your uncle again without delay."

She drew back with a hurt sense of having been unappreciated. The tears sprang to her eyes, and she put her hand into her pocket to take her handkerchief. The hand fell on something that rustled, and was stiff. It was the letter cover she had found in her husband's office that morning. The touch of the crisp paper recalled not only the events of the afternoon, but her own sensations during them. "Where were you this afternoon?" she asked, suddenly checking her tears, as the dry, burning, jealous feeling awoke again in her heart.

"Where was I? Where must I be? Where am I every afternoon? At the office—confound it!"

"You were not there all the afternoon. I—happened to look in there, and you were gone."

"I suppose you came just at the moment I happened to be absent, then. I had to see one or two men on business. Not pleasant business. I was not amusing myself, I assure you," he added with a short hard laugh.

"What men had you to see?"

"Oh, no one whom you know anything about. Isn't dinner ready? I shan't dress. I have to go out again this evening."

"This evening!"

"Yes; it is a frightful bore, but I have a business appointment. Do ring, and tell the cook to make haste."

"You are not going out again this evening, Ancram!"

"I tell you I must. How can you be so childish, Castalia? Whilst I am gone you can employ yourself in making out the draught of a letter to your uncle."

"I will not write to my uncle! I will not. You don't care for me. You—you deceive me," burst out Castalia. And then a storm of sobs choked her voice, and she hurried away, filling the little house with a torrent of incoherent sounds.

Algy looked after her, with his head bent down and his eyebrows raised. Castalia was really very trying to live with. As to her refusal to write to her uncle, she would not of course persist in it. It was out of the question that she should persist in opposing any wish of his. But she was really very trying.

When dinner was announced, Castalia sent word that she had a headache and could not eat. She was lying down in her own room. Her husband murmured a few words of sympathy, but ate his dinner with no sensible diminution of appetite, and, as soon as it was despatched, he lit a cigar, wrapped himself in his great coat, and went out.

Castalia heard the street-door shut. She rose swiftly from the bed on which she had thrown herself, put on a bonnet and cloak, muffled her face in a veil, and followed her husband.

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE NARROWING OF THE NET.

Small as the instrument was of which I had so fortunately possessed myself, just as my quest seemed hopeless, its shape did not admit of being placed in the pocket. I huddled it up, therefore, as well as I could, in the breast of my coat, and fled downstairs into the library, where I concealed it, until the already deepening dusk of evening should permit me to carry it unperceived to Mr. Wilde's. To my own room I positively did not dare remove it, since that would have necessitated my passing brother Alec's apartment, where I knew Mrs. Raeburn to be. It was not fear that I now experienced in regard to her—if what the doctor had hinted was correct, I had discovered the proof of something which should put her in fear of me rather—but a certain loathing and abhorrence, begotten partly of my original dislike of her, and partly of the remembrance of that scene of the previous night in the sick man's room, for the terrors of which I somehow held her accountable.

As soon as it grew dark I left the Priory, taking the instrument with me just as it was, but well concealed in the folds of my winter cloak.

"You have found it," were Mr. Wilde's first eager words, when we were left alone together in his parlour. "It was a chopping-machine, very small, and of sharpest steel, was it not?"

"You have described it as well as if you had seen it," said I, producing it from my cloak. He looked as pleased as a child who has guessed a riddle.

"And yet there are some people, Sheddon, who scoff at science!" exclaimed he vehemently; "who tell us that the Creator, who has endowed man with intelligence, is averse to its exercise, even in His own behalf. He has helped us in this search, no doubt; but unless a miracle had been vouchsafed to us, how, without yonder book, should I have ever suspected the means by which this crime was to have been consummated, and thereby been able to avert it?"

I was wholly unable to account for this outburst, which had relation, doubtless, to that difference of opinion in religious matters that had lost Mr. Wilde his intended wife, and with which I did not till afterwards become acquainted; but at that moment I was only curious to discover the matter which I myself, though as a mere instrument, had brought to so successful an issue.

"I know nothing as yet, remember, Mr. Wilde, of any crime," pleaded I. "You promised me to tell all——"

"I will; but stay one moment;" he rang the bell for his servant. "Go to the Infirmary, and take this note to nurse Hopkins—the woman who came down from town last week; and in the meantime, leave orders that, until she arrives, we are not to be disturbed by anybody. It is a long story, Sheddon, that I have to tell you, and one that must needs have no listener—as I hope—beside yourself; if others force me to make it public, it will be at their own peril. Not another day, not another hour, shall Miss Floyd's life be risked, to save them from the gallows."

"Gertrude's life be risked!" repeated

I, in horror. "Is it her life, then, that is menaced? Until this moment, I deemed that this foul play, at which you hinted, was directed against Mr. Alexander!"

"I know it," was my companion's quiet rejoinder; "and finding your suspicions take that channel, I did not divert them to the true one. If you had thought it possible, nay, probable, as I have done for months, that Gertrude Floyd, the being most dear to you on earth, was being done to death slowly, but certainly, by the hand of her own relative and hostess, yet without one grain of proof to support such a charge—life, under that roof, would have been intolerable, impossible for you. Yet it was necessary, you see, that you should remain there, and by doing so the crime, though late, still in time has been discovered, and the catastrophe averted."

"You are sure that it is in time, Mr. Wilde?" interrupted I, passionately; "that the precious moments are not being wasted, even now, while we are speaking?"

"I am quite sure, my dear lad. Without this talisman here"—he pointed to the machine—"the wicked witch has no power to work her will, nor will she discover its loss, until she is rendered in all other respects powerless. Listen then, without fear, to a story that, indeed, is grim enough, but which can now have no tragical termination.

"When I was first consulted, nearly a year ago, by Miss Floyd, there were circumstances in her case, though I made no mention of them at the time, which puzzled me exceedingly; her symptoms, though common enough in some respects, suggested, in others, those produced by the presence of some irritant poison. These, however, were in a very incipient stage, and on the patient's removal, at my recommendation, to Stanbrook, they disappeared almost immediately. This rapid recovery, which you all hailed with such natural delight, was by no means satisfactory to me. Had her ailment been of an ordinary description, she would have more gradually become convalescent, whereas, if it were caused by some noxious drug or other substance, the administration of which had been intermitted, she would probably have recovered at once, as in fact she did. The nature of Mr. Alexander Raeburn's illness became such as to give me no further excuse for attendance on him on his return to the Priory, and Miss Floyd was thus removed from under my professional eye. However, since I heard nothing of a relapse in her case, I had begun to think I had been mistaken in my ideas regarding it, until about five months ago, when you requested me again to visit her, since she complained of the same ailments, when my suspicions at once reasserted themselves, and with renewed vigour. I must tell you, too, that they had even then a living object; they had originally been turned towards Mrs. Raeburn, by certain vague expressions dropped from her brother-in-law's lips at Stanbrook, and which, under other circumstances, I should probably have set down as one of the vagaries of a waning brain. 'When I am gone,' he once observed to me, 'take care of Gerty.'"

"He used the very same words, Mr. Wilde, to me!" cried I, "and at about the same time."

"Very likely, though to one in your position they were more natural, and would, therefore, have less significance. It was then that the poor old man began to feel that his intelligence was departing from him, and he wished probably, while it still remained with him, to give us warning of the danger that menaced his favourite."

"But how could he have known the danger?"

"He did not know it, but he had, doubtless, reasons unknown to us for vaguely suspecting it. In the first place, he hated his sister-in-law, and believed her capable (as I do) of committing any atrocity; and secondly, seeing him growing day by day into his second childhood, she was perhaps more imprudent in expressing her feelings towards Gertrude; at all events, he had discovered them to be hostile; and he knew that, after his own demise, his brother Mark would be her heir-at-law."

"That is true," cried I, a flood of light seeming here to pour in upon me. "He, doubtless, feared foul play for her, since, when speaking of himself, before he had made his will, he told me with his own lips that he durst not pass a night at the Priory under the same roof as Mrs. Raeburn while her husband was his heir!"

"The vague words dropped by Mrs. Raeburn," continued Mr. Wilde, "fell, in my case, upon ears prepared for them; and my suspicions ripened to certainty when you came to me with the news of Miss Floyd's second seizure. I felt convinced that there was some evil agency at work, not resident in her own constitution, and I recognised the agent in Mrs. Raeburn. You remember how I bade you watch that woman, under pretence of convincing ourselves that Miss Floyd received sufficient attention at her hands; whereas I really feared lest her hostess should pay her a too assiduous service. In particular, my suspicion was—and it has been confirmed—that Mrs. Raeburn prepared her meals."

"That very idea crossed my own mind!" exclaimed I, excitedly; "yet, when I expressed it to yourself this afternoon, you positively affirmed it to be groundless."

"You asked me if anyone was being poisoned, Sheddon," answered my companion gravely, "and I told you that that was not the case; nor was it so. If it had been so, I should have discovered it long ago. Neither I, however, nor the doctor from London, whom, as you know, I compelled them to send for, could come to any definite conclusion on the matter. We knew only that the patient was growing worse and worse without any adequate cause. The tests which I applied, with the view of discovering the precise nature of the disease, all failed. Then I read again every work that bore upon the subject of irritant poisons; and among them I read this book."

Here he took down a small volume of some antiquity from the bookshelf, and opened it at a place which he had marked.

"This is a scientific treatise upon Toxicology, written too long ago to be of much service, but it contains an appendix which will never grow out of date, since its contents are obtained direct from the great storehouse of human nature. The author narrates in it certain professional experiences of his own, one of which has an especial interest for ourselves at this moment. He describes how a certain person attempted the life of a rich man by 'chopping horsehair exceedingly small and mixing it with his food.' You see now that this has been the device pursued with respect to poor Miss Floyd. I myself only realised it a few hours ago, when your mention of having seen Mrs. Raeburn taking the horsehair out of the sofa at once reminded me of this anecdote, and placed me on the right track. Yonder piece of chicken, part of what was intended for Miss Floyd's mid-day meal, was sprinkled with horsehair, as my microscope revealed. She was sleeping when I took it from her room, into which I had just seen it taken by Mrs. Raeburn's hands. If further proof were needed, here is horsehair upon the very instrument itself, with respect to which long impunity has, doubtless, made her careless. The hand of constant crime, like that of labour, loses its 'dainty sense.'"

Thus spoke Mr. Wilde, with all the calmness of one pursuing a philosophical investigation, while horror seemed to be freezing the very marrow of my bones. His own nature was stirred to its very depths with indignation, but, as he afterwards explained to me, he feigned this stoical calm for my own sake, for my nerves, already shattered by the events of the past night, were in no state for the reception of such a piece of intelligence, though it was impossible for him to avoid making me his confidant.

"Why do we lose time?" cried I, rousing myself with an effort, as from some hideous dream, and springing to my feet. "Why not warn Gertrude at once? Why not arrest this wicked woman?"

"For many reasons, my good lad," was the quiet reply, "but mainly for Gertrude's sake. Should she come to know, in her present condition, that she has been tended for months by one who, in the person of her friend and hostess, was dooming her to death, the shock might destroy her altogether. Do not suppose that I am indifferent to your distress and anxiety," continued my companion, laying his hand upon my shoulder, and speaking very kindly; "my solicitude for this dear young lady is second only to your own. Have confidence in me as heretofore, and, believe me, all shall be well. For the present, Miss Floyd is safe, and in a few minutes one will be here in whom I have implicit trust, and who will henceforth take her in sole charge. There is the door-bell; she is here."

A middle-aged, grave-looking woman, whom Mr. Wilde addressed as Mrs. Hopkins, was presently ushered into the room.

"The situation," said he, "of which I told you as likely to offer itself is now at your service. You have made the preparations of which I wrote, and are ready to accept it?"

"At once, sir."

"This is a rare and valuable specimen of womankind, Harry," observed the doctor, smiling, "who never uses four words when three will do. Go downstairs, Mrs. Hopkins, for five minutes, and then I will give you your instructions."

When the nurse was gone the doctor sat down and wrote a letter, during which I waited very impatiently, for it seemed to me monstrous that he should waste time in correspondence at such a crisis.

"Whom on earth are you writing to, Mr. Wilde?" inquired I at last.

"To Mrs. Raeburn."

"To Mrs. Raeburn!" echoed I, almost as much disgusted as surprised. "How is it possible you can do that?"

"It is a mere act of civility, Sheddon. I am about to return her this chopping-machine, by favour of Mrs. Hopkins, a hospital nurse, who will be henceforth placed in sole charge of my patient, Miss Gertrude Floyd. Mrs. Raeburn is far too clever not to appreciate, at once, the entire situation; but I have added a hint to the effect that she must leave this place within twenty-four hours. I do not spare her on her own account, you may be sure; but there is no middle course between this method of proceeding and the calling in of the police, which would mean ruin and shame to the innocent as well as the guilty. And now, my lad, do you go back home with an easy mind, for it is just as well that you should be at the Priory when Mrs. Hopkins arrives there, to see what comes of it."

"But what will come of it?" inquired I, anxiously. "I mean as respects Mrs. Raeburn?"

"That is her look-out," answered Mr. Wilde, sternly. "Within the next twenty-four hours her fate is in her own hands; after that, if she has not complied with my demand, she must take the consequences. Stop! there is one thing more, Sheddon, in which I shall have to trust to your discretion. If Miss Floyd requires professional aid, you will of course at once send for me; but if Mrs. Raeburn should need a doctor, let some one else be sent for. Do you understand?"

I nodded, thinking in my simplicity that his meaning was that his indignation against this woman was such that he could not trust himself even to minister professionally to her needs; then, throwing my cloak about me, I ran home by the shortest way.

THE HAND AND THE MASTER-FINGER.

The hand, most eloquent of the body's silent members, stands man in good stead when trumpeter tongue is mute. "By the motion of the right hand," says quaint old Holme, "we crave silence; by clapping hands we express joy and gladness, and that we are well pleased with what is done; by laying the hand upon the breast we show a truth and earnestness to be in us; by striking our hand upon the thigh we tell we are moved with admiration; by striking the breast with the fist we give token of sorrow and repentance; by erecting and shaking of the right hand aloft military persons notify any prosperous success; by a beck of the hand we call a person to us; by pointing out with the fingers we give directions; by stretching out the hand 'grippen' we show we are filled with wrath and fury, and threaten revenge; we bless or curse by a lifting up of the hands; and by laying the right hand upon the Book oblige ourselves, by a solemn oath, to declare the truth."

In Morocco the number "five" is never mentioned in the Sultan's presence, because five is the number of the fingers of the hand; and the hand, as the wielder of sceptre, sword, and pen should be, is the symbol of authority all the world over. This gives a meaning to the custom of saluting a ruler's hand by way of homage, and no courtly ceremony can boast a greater antiquity than that of kissing hands. Priam, supplicating Achilles to restore the body of Hector, calls himself the most miserable of men in being forced to kneel before the murderer of his children, and kiss the hand yet reeking with their blood. Roman soldiers kissed the hand of their generals; consuls, tribunes, and dictators permitted a favoured few to pay them the same mark of respect. Under the emperors, kissing the imperial hand was held an essential duty, on the part of courtiers of high rank; and, taking a leaf out of the Pagan's book, as was too much their habit, the bishops of the early Christian Church gave their hands to the lips of inferior ministers. The wearers of the triple crown were content with being honoured in the same fashion, until one of the Leos, not caring to exhibit a mutilated hand, substituted his foot, and no one daring to protest against the innovation, his successors were careful not to resort to the less abject ceremony. It may be doubted if any Pope would have persuaded Cardinal John of Lorraine to kiss his toe. When the Duchess of Savoy proffered her fair fingers to that lip-loving churchman, he declined the favour with disdain, declaring he was accustomed to make free with the lips of the greatest queen in the world, and was not going to do less by a dirty little duchess; then, seizing the astonished lady by the waist, the bold cardinal, spite of struggles and perturbations, kissed her thrice upon the mouth. With equal disregard for etiquette, but with more simplicity, did the country dames, to whom Charles the Second presented his hand, put up their lips for the king to kiss, a breach of custom the Merry Monarch readily forgave; forgave, we may be sure, with more sincerity than James the First forgave Sir Henry Yelverton for speaking disrespectfully of his countrymen, when, in token of pardon, he allowed the indiscreet orator to kiss his royal hand thrice ere he left the presence. Kissers at court are, we believe, forbidden to appear with their hands gloved. It was not always so, for in a letter dated 1625 we read: "This day my Lord Coke, with his gloves on, touched and kissed the king's hand, but whether to be confirmed a councillor or cashiered, I cannot yet learn." From kissing hands at court came kissing hands in courting, a practice the learned Selden considered as foolish as to eat the paring of an apple when one might taste the fruit itself; and from kissing hands for love came kissing hands for politeness' sake, and the use of the phrase, "I kiss your hand," as a salutation upon leave-taking, without a thought of suiting the action to the word.

A story is told of an old laird, who, being presented to George the Fourth at a levee, in his ignorance and anxiety to get through the business, ignored the hand extended to him, and, with a hasty bow, edged towards the door with all speed. Brought up by Lord Erroll's whispered reminder, "Kiss hands! kiss hands!" the startled old gentleman, facing about, kissed both his hands at the king, as if wafting a cordial recognition to a friend at a distance. All unconsciously, the laird was acting according to ancient rule, for only the greater subjects of the later Cæsars were permitted to press their lips upon imperial fingers. Inferior folks kissed their own hands, as they were wont to do upon entering the temples of the gods; a custom Pliny set down among those which were followed for no known reason but their antiquity. This sort of finger flattery was not unknown in England. Spenser describes a brave and rightful courtier as one who,

> Unto all doth yield due courtesy,
> But not with kissed hand below the knee,
> As that same April crew are wont to do.

When Grumio arrives home with the news that Petruchio and his bride are near at hand, he says, "Call forth Nathaniel, Joseph, Nicholas, Philip, Walter, Sugarsop, and the rest. Let their heads be sleekly combed, their blue coats brushed, and their garters of an indifferent knit: let them curtsey with their left legs, and not presume to touch a hair of my master's horse-tail till they kiss their hands!" In one form or another kissing hands, in respect to sovereigns and superiors, is practised in so many parts of the world, finding equal favour with the savage as with the civilised, that it may be said to be all but universal.

"Who is he that will strike hands with me?" asks Job. "A man void of understanding strikes hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friends," saith the wise king of Israel. In this old-world custom of striking hands, hand-shaking, no doubt, originated, for, before it became a mere friendly greeting, a shake of the hand was accepted as a pledge. When Ferdinand and Miranda strike their tender bargain, he says, "Here is my hand," and she replies, "And mine with my heart on it." Dunbar, Lord Treasurer of Scotland, congratulating Yelverton upon having made his peace at court, said to him, "I will desire your friendship, as you do mine, and I will promise to do you my best; whereupon as pledge I give you my hand!" And so, shaking Yelverton by the hand, he bade him farewell. Nowadays, a shake of the hand may mean very much, or nothing at all. The strong, hearty grip for grip of two old, long-parted friends, meeting unexpectedly, is one thing; the nerveless, loose, indifferent clasp of acquaintanceship another. Sydney Smith attempted to classify hand-shakes, dividing them into the high official, the sepulchral, the digitory, the shakus rusticus, and the retentive. The first was practised by the then Archbishop of York, "who kept his body erect, carried your hand aloft to a level with his chin, and gave it a rapid, short shake." Sir John Mackintosh affected the sepulchral, "laying his open hand flat on your palm, so coldly, you were hardly aware of its contiguity." The digitory—in favour with the high clergy—was adopted by Brougham, who used to put forth his forefinger with, "How arre you?" The shakus rusticus was having "your hand seized as in an iron grasp, betokening rude health, a warm heart, and distance from the Metropolis, but producing a sense of relief when your hand is released with the fingers unbroken." The retentive shake being that "which, beginning with vigour, pauses, as it were, to take breath, but without relinquishing its prey, and before you are aware begins again, till you are anxious as to the result, and have no shake left in you." The witty canon might have added to his list by going a little farther afield—say to California or Norway—which, having nothing else in common, are both tremendous countries for hand-shaking. Of the latter a writer says, "If you give your curricle-boy a few shillings, he at once shakes hands; if you hold out an oat-cake to a beggar, he will employ the same token of friendship; even a gipsy-woman, who is accommodated merely with an ember to light her pipe from, will fervently grasp your hand in thanks." The simple, good-natured peasants of Coburg acknowledge a favour in the same way. When the Queen paid her first visit to the duchy, she tells us that, while sketching in a field, "One or two of the women, who were making hay, came close to me, and said, as all the country people do here, 'Guten abend' ('Good even'), and, upon my replying something about the weather, one of them began to talk. She had two little children with her; I gave her some money, and she shook my hand for it."

If there be anything in chiromancy, every man may be said to carry his life in his hand, since he can read in its lines all that has happened, and is to happen, to him; while the adept in chirognomony, if he has not his destiny at his fingers' ends, can, by taking note of their shape, find out what nature designed him for, and shape his course accordingly, and, by so doing, show himself as wise as the ancient physicians who were careful to use only the fourth finger in mixing their medicines, in the faith that if it came in contact with anything hurtful to human health, it would signify the same to the heart of the mixer. To this fanciful nervous connection between the heart and the fourth finger, the latter is said to owe its being chosen to bear the golden circlet of marriage. This distinction, however, it has not always enjoyed. Some have assumed that the thumb-ring was an emblem of widowhood; whereas it was the sign of wifehood. In one of his controversial pamphlets, Milton says of an opponent: "He sets one out half a dozen phthisical mottoes, hopping short in the measure of convulsive fits, in which labour the agony of his mind having escaped narrowly, instead of well-sized periods, he greets us with a quantity of thumb-ring posies." That these posied thumb-rings were wedding-rings is shown by Butler charging the Puritans with wishing to abolish the tool with which the bridegroom was married to a thumb; and Tom d'Urfey, when describing a rapid act of courtship, writes:

Ere three days about were come,
The ring was put upon the thumb.

In old days, the thumb received the ring as the bridegroom promised to endow the bride with all his worldly goods; and, after passing successively to the second and third fingers, when "Amen" was pronounced, it rested on the fourth finger, to be replaced upon the thumb at the end of the ceremony. Upon the master-finger ladies wore their wedding-rings down to the time of George the First, following aldermanic fashion. "When I was about thy years, Hal," says Sir John, "I was not an eagle's talon in the waist; I could have crept into any alderman's thumb-ring." It was upon her thumb, too, that Chaucer's Canace placed the magic ring, enabling her to hold commune with the birds, and to divine the hidden virtues of every plant that grew.

The thumb was certainly the fittest bearer of matrimony's badge, seeing that oaths ratified by it were held irrevocable. Once upon a time a northern princess took the veil, before it was discovered that state policy required she should become a wife. A dispensation was obtained, but, unlike the positive maiden in the song, the princess was determined she would be a nun; and, when threatened with force, placed her right thumb upon a sword-blade, and swore she would marry no man. She had her way, for not even the Pope could overcome that oath. The phrase, "under my hand and seal," ought, perhaps, to run, "under my thumb and seal;" for Ducange tells us that, in the middle ages, the pressure of the thumb upon the wax was the usual form of ratifying important documents—a statement borne out by a verse of an Elizabethan love ditty:

I thank you, Doron, and will think on you:
I love you, Doron, and will wink on you;
I seal your charter-patent with my thumbs,
Come, kiss and part, for fear my mother comes!

"We may lick thooms upo' that!" says an Ulster man in token of agreement; and the old custom, common to the ancient Iberians and the Goths, and in vogue among modern Moors, of completing a bargain by the licking and joining of thumbs, was not extinct in Scotland when Erskine wrote his Institutes. Decrees are yet in existence, sustaining sales upon the ground that the parties concerned had licked thumbs. This mode of binding an agreement was used to strange purposes in 1642. Serjeant Kyle, of Sir James Montgomery's regiment, having some words with Lieutenant Baird, threw down his glove by way of challenge. Baird having no glove handy wherewith to answer the gage, licked his thumb and said, "There is my parole for it." "When?" asked Kyle. "Presently," was the reply. Kyle slipped out of the house. Baird followed, with his sword drawn, and in five minutes was a dead man. Another thumb-licking device, fraught with less fatal consequences, but apt, nevertheless, to lay lovers of big bumpers down among the dead men, was that called "drinking super-nagulum." The drinker, after emptying his cup, turned it bottom upwards, and with a fillip sent the last drop upon his thumbnail, and then licked it off. If the drop proved too big and ran off the nail, he was held to have shirked his liquor and had to drink a second bumper by way of penance. According to Lamb, the art of broiling, and the virtues of roast pig, might have remained for ever unknown, had not Bobo burned his fingers, and licked them to soothe the pain. A similar accident proved a lucky one to the Irish hero, Fingal. He served a giant, who, after persevering for seven years, at last succeeded in hooking and landing a salmon possessing the property of communicating the gift of prevision to the mortal who ate the first mouthful of it. To cook this wonderful fish was Fingal's task. Omitting to turn it at the proper time, a blister rose on its side; he, in affright, pressing it down with his thumb, of course got burned; and equally, of course, put his thumb into his mouth, fortunately with a bit of salmon attached to it. The power his master had toiled so long to win was Fingal's, and he wisely quitted his service without giving notice. The angry giant was not long in following the runaway, but it was a hopeless stern-chase, for, whenever Fingal felt a pain in his thumb, he became aware of danger at hand, and learned the way out of it directly he put his thumb to his mouth; and this useful quality Fingal's thumb retained ever afterwards.

Conrad, Lord of Wolfenstein, smiting Dickon Draw-the-Sword with his gauntlet, that worthy "right little said, but bit his glove and shook his head." A fortnight later, and Conrad's corpse was found in Inglewood:

> Unknown the manner of his death,
> Gone was his brand, both sword and sheath;
> But ever from that time 'twas said,
> That Dickon wore a Cologne blade.

Scott — whose habit of writing notes to his works might be advantageously imitated by the poets of the present day— says that to bite the glove or the thumb was a Border pledge of mortal revenge; and in illustration relates how a young Teviotdale laird, upon discovering on the morrow of a hard drinking bout that his glove had been bitten, insisted upon knowing with whom he had quarrelled, as he must have satisfaction, although he remembered nothing at all about the matter. His curiosity was gratified, and he fell, as he deserved to do, in the duel. In England thumb-biting was practised to goad an adversary into fighting. Dekker tells us that St. Paul's Walk was notable for shoulderings, jeerings, and biting of thumbs to beget quarrels; and Shakespeare imports the fashion into Verona. When Gregory and Sampson espy two Montague men, out fly their swords; but prudent Sampson, to compel the others to take the initiative, bites his thumb at them, "which is a disgrace if they bear it." Challenged with the question, "Did you bite your thumb at me, sir?" he replies, "No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb!" and in a few minutes the fray begins. It was not absolutely necessary to put the thumb to the mouth. In 1291 a rude fellow was sent to prison for casting vile contempt upon the clerk of the Sheriff of London, by raising his thumb and saying, "Iphurt, Iphurt!" "in manifest contempt of our lord the king."

If one Neapolitan wishes to anger another, he places the palm of the right hand on the back of the left and shakes the crossed thumbs, symbolical of donkey's ears, at him; a pleasant bit of pantomime answering to the "taking a sight" popular elsewhere — a sign of contemptuous defiance, said to be at least as old as ancient Assyria. At any rate, it is as old as Rabelais, who thus describes Panurge receiving Thaumaste:—"Panurge suddenly lifted up in the air his right hand and put the thumb thereof into the nostril of the same side, holding his four fingers straight out and closed orderly in a parallel line to the point of his nose, shutting the left eye wholly, and making the other wink with profound depression of the eyebrows and eyelids. Then lifted he up his left hand, with hard wringing and stretching forth of his four fingers, and elevating his thumb, which he held in a line directly correspondent to the situation of his right hand, with the distance of a cubit and a half between them. This done, in the same form he abased towards the ground both the one and the other hand. Lastly, he held them in the midst, as aiming at the Englishman's nose." Bon Gaultier's line, "Coffee-milling, care and sorrow, with a nose-adapted thumb," is explained by "Jabez," in Notes and Queries, as having reference to another way of taking a sight, on which the closed right hand was made to revolve round the little finger of the left. He laments that the degenerate schoolboy of our day only takes a modified sight, consisting of the right hand locked, with the first finger applied to the nose and the thumb to the chin. The change is to be deplored, but the new method is as effectually provocative of a row as the old, and what more does a boy want?

A maimed thumb sufficed to exempt a Roman from military service. A certain knight, being of Norval's opinion, that sons were best kept at home, cut off his children's thumbs; a cruel kindness, for which Augustus confiscated the fond father's property. Norman barons were given to hanging men and women up by their thumbs; a mode of torture the Spaniards improved upon by inventing the thumbscrew, for the special benefit of heretics. In mediæval England, secretaries found guilty of forging or falsifying deeds were liable to lose both thumbs; while to draw a sword upon an alderman of the city of London involved the cutting off of the offender's right hand. By an Act of Philip and Mary, authors, printers, and publishers of seditious writings were visited with the same barbarous punishment, and, although some lawyers contended that the Act was a temporary one, and died with Mary, it was put in force, in her sister's reign, against John Stubbs and his publisher, in Westminster market-place; Stubbs, as soon as the executioner had done his work, pulling off his hat with his left hand and shouting "God save the Queen!" A similar penalty, preliminary to a harder one yet, followed violent contempt of court to a much later date. Pepys records an instance in what he terms "a good story" of a prisoner flinging a stone at the judge, "while they were considering to transport him to save his life." The secretary's good story is set down in the legal jargon of the time, in Chief Justice Ireby's "Notes to Dyer's Reports," and, serious as is the matter, the manner of reporting it is so comical that we cannot forbear quoting it. "Richardson, Ch. Just. de C. Benc. al Assises at Salisbury, in isummer 1631, fuit assault per prisoner la condemna pur felony; que puis son condemnation ject un brickbat a le dit Justice, qui narrowly mist; et pur ces immediately fuit indictment drawn, per Noy, envers le prisoner, et son dexter manus ampute, and fix at gibbet, sur qui luy meme immediatement hange in presence de court."

At this time the hand of an executed man readily fetched ten guineas, being held as efficacious in working cures, as the holy bones of the saintliest of saints. Hangmen added to their income by taking money from persons desirous of receiving the dead-stroke; and it is still an article of popular faith in some parts of England, that a swollen neck may be reduced to its normal proportions by simply striking it three times with the hand of a man who has been hanged, but the operation ought to be performed before the criminal is cut down. Practisers of forbidden arts turned the hand of a dead murderer to much worse purpose, rendering it, by sundry incantations, the burglar's best companion, providing the proprietor made a candlestick of it, and was not plagued with as bad a memory as the unlucky Cassim Baba, making him forget the "charm" at the critical moment. Of this charm there are several versions, none possibly more effectual than Ingoldsby's:

Now open lock
To the Dead Man's knock!
Fly bolt, and bar, and band!
Nor move, nor swerve,
Joint, muscle, or nerve,
At the spell of the Dead Man's hand!
Sleep all who sleep—wake all who wake,
But be as the dead, for the Dead Man's sake!

The "hand of glory," as it was called, was in use so lately as 1801, for in that year some thieves, in their hurry to get away from a house at Loughcrew, in Meath, left one, candle and all, behind them. A dead hand was also supposed to be an unerring guide to hidden treasure. Dousterswivel, enlightening Oldbuck on the virtues of the Hand of Glory, says: "It is a hand cut off from a man as has been hanged for murder, and dried very nice in de shmoke of juniper; and if you put a little of what you call yew wid your juniper it will not be any better—that is, it will not be no worse. Then you take something of de fatch of de bear, and of de badger, and of de little sucking child as has not been christened, and you do make a candle and put it in de Hand of Glory at de proper hour and minute, wid de proper ceremonish; and he who seeketh for treasure shall never find none at all."

Dead murderers' hands not being always obtainable when wanted, the disciples of Voodoo obviate the difficulty, by investing the hand of any mortal coming to an untimely end with the desired power. Some twelvemonths ago a Mobile negro, after murdering a man, cut off his victim's hand and treated it with quicksilver and chloroform to stay decomposition, in the belief that so long as he carried it about him, he was not only safe from discovery, but could enter a room in which a man lay sleeping, and strip it of its movables without disturbing the occupant. The horrid talisman, however, proved his ruin, helping to convince a jury he was guilty of "murder in the first degree," a crime entailing imprisonment for life. This interesting sample of black humanity achieved his dead hand himself. Touchet, Lord Audley, had his thrust upon him when unhappy Philip Thicknesse, by his last will and testament, directed that, as soon as the breath was out of his body, his right hand should be cut off and sent to Lord Audley, that the sight of it might recall to his duty to God one who had forgotten his duty to his sire. Not so easy to comprehend is the purpose of the strange clause in the will of the late Countess of London: "I further wish my right hand to be cut off and buried in the park at Donnington, at the bend of the hill to the Trent, and a small cross over it, with the motto, 'I byde my time!'" The lady's instructions have been carried out to the letter. Certainly they were too clear to allow of non-fulfilment on the plea of want of preciseness, a plea that might have been raised by the pupil of the old violinist of Villedeuil-sur-Seine, who promised his dying teacher not to allow his hand to be separated from his beloved Guarnarius, and to destroy the latter. Puzzled how to do the one without doing the other, the fiddler's friend could find no better way of keeping his promise than to cut off the violinist's hand at the wrist, and throw it, with the instrument clasped in its rigid fingers, into the Seine, to be fished up by the police, whose minds were much exercised to account for such a strange find, until the young fellow made clean breast of it and set all suspicion of foul play at rest.

COALS IN THE POOL.

Like the rest of London, the silent highway has greatly changed. Gone are the tall, rickety wooden buildings—blackened with age—that gave, according to taste, a tumble-down or a romantic air to waterside scenery. Gone are the wide stretches of mud which adorned the neighbourhood of Hungerford-market; and gone also are the mudlarks, who were wont to disport themselves in their native element, and dive therein for coppers, to the delight of a large and miscellaneous audience. Gone are the tenants of the dry arches of Waterloo-bridge, swept away by ruthless embankment builders. The jolly young waterman, too, is nearly gone. The trim-built wherry does not pay so well as working on a steamer; Chelsea ferry is played out; and Tom Tug, instead of taking a "spell" himself, is carefully looked after by School Board myrmidons, lest his little ones should miss that ceremony. How many Londoners could find Whitehall-stairs? and where, oh! where, is Hungerford-market itself, with its everlasting fish-shops, its myriads of rabbits, its penny ices, and the hobbledehoys and hoydens who used to devour them by the dozen on Sunday evenings, without particular reference to the state of the thermometer? Where are the "gaufres" of my youth? What has become of waterside tavern life, and of that peculiar style of refreshment which required a wooden gallery in the open air, and a rowing-match going on somewhere near, to give a proper flavour to the shrimps, the crusty loaves and butter, the periwinkles and watercresses, the tea and mild ale, the heavy wet, the hot rum and water with lemon in it, and the shag tobacco smoked out of "churchwarden" pipes by a bygone generation? In a pleasantly fraternal way the old inn overhung the river with a kind of "extension" building, excellently well fitted for the discussion of the before-mentioned delicacies, and for salt-water yarns of "admirals of high renown," arctic voyages, and eke for tales of the "blackbird" trade, and anecdotes of opium clippers. They are gone now, those rickety old shanties, with their convenient trap-doors looking down on the water, their wealth of bandanna handkerchiefs, their singularly excellent Hollands, and choice plug tobacco. Luckily, Mr. Tissot was just in time to catch one or two of them, and transfer them to his faithful canvas, before they went altogether. I am told that we are now to have open-air cafés on the Embankment—handsome, Frenchy, gilded places, with little round tables, where, I suppose, people will go to enjoy cigarettes and Apollinaris water, in place of the prime old Jamaica, the choice Geneva, and the full-flavoured Virginia of their forefathers. Shade of Dogget! shall thy immortal rowing-match from Swan to Swan ever come to be gazed upon by drinkers of lemonade, and players at dominoes? Who knows?

In the ancient days, nearly a quarter of a century ago, when Hungerford-market and Fox-under-the-Hill were yet extant, the coalwhipper loomed large among the riverside population. A burly fellow this; a hearty and a strong; a mighty consumer of heavy wet, and given to hitting out straight from the shoulder at times, but companionable enough in his cups, as was testified to by the quiet foreign gentleman, who, loving beer, especially "portare," and fancying that he got it better at the Fox-under-the-Hill than anywhere else, frequented, for many months, the haunt of the "coalies," and not being acquainted with the English language, fraternised agreeably with the natives in dumb show—a proof, if any were wanted, that your true drinker can get on excessively well without conversation, provided the liquor be sound and plentiful. In the days referred to, the ships yclept "colliers," which brought coal into the Thames, were commonly old brigs, superannuated from regular work, but considered good enough to carry coals. Their age was marvellous—fifty, sixty, and a hundred years old, were common enough. Among these veterans were famous ships which had sailed round and round the world, carrying bold discoverers; dashing merchant captains, smart enough to dodge the Channel privateers; and less scrupulous, but not less smart, runners of "ebony"—black as their later cargo of carbon. To the complexion of a collier they had come at last, and performed their voyage between Newcastle and London with greater or less punctuality—generally less—until, in the fulness of time, Davy Jones waxed impatient, and engulfed his sturdy prey beneath the wild grey waters of the North Sea. The old colliers came high up the river to London and Southwark bridges, and were there handed over to the coalwhippers, who unladed the coals into barges and lighters, which, together with the wharfs of numerous coal merchants then occupying the site of the present embankment, gave a generally inky aspect to the riverside—very different from the clean, handsome shore which makes London, when looked at northward, across the Thames, one of the handsomest, if not absolutely the handsomest city in Europe. Colliers, coalwhippers, and weighing-machines have moved lower down the river, to Limehouse; and, in point of fact, the great bulk of the work of unlading, or rather translading, coal in the Thames is done lower down still, on those huge black monsters fast-moored in the Reach, sacred to the name of Bugsby, whoever he may have been. When I say the great bulk of the translading takes place on these enormous edifices, I am not romancing, for Messrs. W. Cory and Son, the proprietors of the "derricks," as these huge rafts are called, unload at them from one million and a quarter to one million and a half tons, out of the two and three quarter million tons of seaborne coal annually imported into London.

Readers of All the Year Round are possibly aware that the largest proportion of the best Wallsend coal comes to London by sea; and it may, perhaps, be known to them that the term "Wallsend," although retained in commerce, no longer indicates the spot whence comes the best house coal. It was once no misnomer. In days long since gone by, the finest coal was drawn from that spot where the old Roman wall comes to an end; but these old pits have been disused for many years, and are filled with water, while the name Wallsend has been applied to the produce of other collieries. It must not, however, be supposed that the name is used indiscriminately. It may be so abused by not over-scrupulous dealers, but, "in the trade," it is restricted to the produce of the following collieries: Hetton, South Hetton, Haswell, Lambtons, Original Hartlepool, and Tees. To no other species of coal is the term "Best Wallsend" applied by the trade; and, when any other coals but those just specified are labelled Best Wallsend by retail dealers, the public are justified in concluding that this is done to mislead and confuse, if not to absolutely cheat, them. In the Metropolis it is clearly to the interest of a coal merchant to call his coals Wallsend, as no species of coal fetches so high a price in the London market, although very excellent fuel comes from other places than Durham. From Yorkshire, from the great Silkstone seam, tapped in various places, come the Newton-Chambers, the Coopers, and the Sharlston coals—known in town as the Best Inland; while the fine coal known as Derby Bright is raised in the neighbouring county. These facts are by no means unworthy the consideration of the metropolitan consumer, if only as a preservative against the panics to which the London market has shown itself peculiarly susceptible. Let but the Londoner hear of strikes in South Wales, or in Lancashire, and he straightway trembles at the possible return of a coal famine, and, by rushing into the market to secure himself, contributes to bring about the very result he is anxious to avert. This sensitiveness of the London market is peculiar to itself, and is not to be explained in any other way, than by the ignorance of the great body of consumers concerning the native land of their coals. Let them, therefore, be of good cheer so long as Durham, Yorkshire, and Derbyshire are free from strikes, for no disturbances in other districts will produce more than a slight effect on the London market, unless the natural course of business is accelerated by a panic. It is hardly necessary to say that Yorkshire and Derbyshire coal is brought to London by railway, and that, until lately, a small proportion of Wallsend also came by the same route. During the last few years, however, the swift steam-colliers—fine iron screw-steamers of from eight hundred to a thousand tons burden, which have superseded the ancient square-rigged wooden ships — have completely beaten the railways as coal-carriers from the great northern coal-field. By rail, it costs for railway dues, truck hire, and the like, some eleven or twelve shillings to bring a ton of coals from the pit's mouth, in Durham, to King's Cross; while seven shillings, or seven and sixpence, represent the average difference between the price at the pit and at the ship's side in the Thames. Thus, when Lambtons or Hettons are to be bought on the spot for fourteen shillings the ton, it may be calculated that they will fetch, under ordinary circumstances, from a guinea to twenty-two shillings in the Thames, and will cost the actual consumer about thirty or thirty-one shillings, screened and delivered in his own cellar. Importers of coal by railway find it exceedingly difficult to compete with these rates, but there are yet little mysteries of trade which ease their position in a certain degree. For instance, a ton of Wallsend, at the ship's side in the Thames, means the statute ton of twenty hundredweight; while the ton of coal loaded into railway trucks, on the siding of a Durham colliery, means twenty-one hundredweight. This is not all the advantage possessed by the railway coal merchant, for he saves a heavy percentage by getting his coal in large merchantable pieces, requiring little or no screening, and involving no loss on the "small." For a long while these counterbalancing advantages enabled the railway importers to make a hard fight of it; but it would seem that water-carriage has, in this case, at last carried the day. In every possible way time is economised in the management of the vast fleet of steam-colliers, now running between London and the North. There is no rest for the steam-collier, for on the number of voyages she can perform per annum depends the percentage of profit she returns to her proprietor or proprietors; for it is by no means unusual for great merchants, like Messrs. Cory and Son, to go halves in a fleet of ships with a colliery owner—an arrangement which has been found highly beneficial "all round;" for the colliery owner loads the ship and despatches her at once, and the consignees are equally brisk in unlading, and sending her back for a fresh cargo. It is said that a screw-collier, carrying a thousand tons in her hold, has been laden, at Sunderland, in little over three hours. As certain ancient voyagers remark, "I do not know, for I have not seen it;" but I have seen sail empty away down the Thames, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a stately ship which had only arrived at one o'clock in the morning, deep-laden with best Wallsend. As whole, or part owners, the firm above referred to are interested in about forty iron steam screw-colliers, and possess, on their own account, over four hundred coal barges, seven steam-tugs for towing the same, and a couple of derricks, at which from thirty to forty shiploads of coal, amounting in the aggregate to some thirty thousand tons, are transladed weekly.

These derricks are well worthy of inspection, and Atlas No. 1, as it is now called, affords an excellent instance of the curious habit of English institutions, of floundering from failure to success. Not that the derrick, in its original form, could be regarded as a purely English structure, although it was ugly enough to be intensely national. If I am not mistaken, the idea of a derrick originated in the fertile brain of an American, in whose country derricks of various kinds have long been in use for lifting weights, raising wrecks, and similar purposes. In 1859 it was determined that this country should also have a derrick, and the "subject of the present memoir" was built by the Thames Iron Shipbuilding Company, at Blackwall. As originally constructed, it consisted of a flat-bottomed vessel, two hundred and seventy feet long and ninety feet across the beam. It was divided throughout into a number of water-tight compartments, which could be filled with water, so as to counterbalance a weight on the opposite side. Practically, the derrick was an immense floating steam-crane. From the deck rose an iron tripod, eighty feet high, on the top of which revolved a gigantic boom a hundred and twenty feet long, and above the boom rose the "king post," a continuation of the tripod. This terrible-looking machine was fitted with steam-engines and tremendous tackle for raising sunken ships, and could be propelled at the rate of four miles an hour. The writer recollects it very well, with its Tyburn look, as it lay moored off Execution Dock, and had horrid dreams—after partaking only thrice of whitebait, not to mention salmon, roast duck, beans and bacon, and cold gooseberry tart — about its raising the sunken ships of dead and gone pirates, and hanging their skeletons all in row on its giant yard-arm. It did not raise much, however—not even the wind. Whether the machinery would not work, or ships left off sinking within a thousand miles of the derrick, I know not, but the concern was wound up, if the ships were not, and the famous locker, buried in the sea depths, remained unrifled.

In the hands of Messrs. Cory, the hitherto luckless derrick was turned to admirable use. From a despairing yard-arm going about pretending it could lift ships, it was turned into a practical unloader of coals. When we consider how important an element is time in all modern affairs, we at once see the value of gigantic machinery for transferring cargo. On the original derrick, and on one subsequently built on the Tyne and towed round to the Thames, are found every necessary appliance for shifting coal rapidly from the steam-collier to the attendant barge. Looked at from the river, the machine has an uncanny aspect. It is hideously black and huge. Great gaunt limbs are moving restlessly up and down, and whisking suddenly round like the legs of a giant blackbeetle chained down on its back and kicking wildly for freedom. On board all is busy life. The callipee of the great insect, turned upwards, is covered with miniature railways and countless trucks flying in all directions, but falling in with one symmetrical design. Overhead the limbs—hydraulic cranes of immense power, but docile as well-trained politicians—whirl round the iron buckets of coal and deposit them in the shoots, at the will of the man who sits, like a railway pointsman, in his narrow box. On one side of the derrick lies, fast-moored, the steam-collier, while around her bows and stern cluster the funereal barges. Down dips the bucket into the hold, and presently emerges therefrom charged with coal. While being whirled through the air the weight of the bucketful—some three-quarters of a ton—is exactly registered by an ingenious instrument used to hard work, and not apt to get out of order, for its work is of a responsible kind. As the weight is taken and registered the registrar touches a bell, which advises the "tipper" that it is all right, and the bucket, now poised above a "shoot," pours its contents into that cunningly-devised piece of mechanism, which, screening the coals as they go, delivers them with the smallest possible breakage into the barge. When the derrick is in full blast, with every hydraulic crane at work, its deck is not a favourable spot for airing lavender kid gloves and snowy waistcoats. One treads upon coal dust. Coal is flying past on multitudinous trucks. Coal in tons is flying about in the air. One breathes an atmosphere of coal, and the adhesive dust clings to face, beard, and raiment with curious tenacity.

In its inner life the derrick is not less worthy of notice. Buried in the iron compartments is a complete engineer's shop, for repairing whatever tackle may chance to get out of gear. Once upon a time there was also a telegraphic apparatus, but the casualties to which ocean cables are subject proved to be as nothing, compared to those which befell the tiny submerged line between the derrick and the river shore. Small craft of all kinds help themselves in river navigation by dragging their anchors, which duly brought up the cable—a small matter if it had been carefully unhitched and allowed to sink again; but minor skippers are not over particular, and the cable was so frequently cut that the private telegraph was given up in despair. Gas is made on board, and on a sufficiently large scale for all requirements—which is not saying a little, for, on the sable derrick, work goes on by night as by day. As a ship arrives she is laid-to, and the busy inhabitants of the great raft proceed to work their wicked will upon her. From the gas department below proceed pipes for illuminating the deck, and from them flexible tubes are conveyed on board the vessel to be unloaded. The hold to be emptied is as fully lighted as the derrick itself, and be there heat or cold, rain, or snow, or fog, the cranes whisk round and round through midnight hours as beneath the summer sun. Precious hours cannot be lost. The good ship, like an impatient racer, has no sooner completed one "heat," than a start is imperatively demanded for the next. She must be up and away to the North for a fresh cargo, and gas blazes and men toil in the dusty air that not a moment may be wasted. From thirty to thirty-five thousand feet of gas are consumed weekly—a quantity representing no small consumption of gas coal.

With that absorbent faculty displayed by great firms, Messrs. Cory have recently taken to building their own barges. Similar instances are not wanting in many of the great industries of England. When Bessemer steel first became a popular metal, the smelter bought his coal of the colliery proprietor, and his iron-ore from the mine owner, and produced his fine hæmatite and Bessemer pig-iron. This was then dealt with by the "converter," who made the pig-iron into Bessemer steel, and sold the ingots to one who reheated them, and turned them out as rails and tires for railway use. All this is changing rapidly. The great contractor owns his own coal mines, smelts his metal, runs it in its molten form straight into the "converter," and turns it out in rails without ever allowing it to cool, from the moment the iron-ore, flux, and fuel are piled in the blast furnace; or, like the great Palmer Company, takes coal and iron-ore, and never leaves them till there comes out an iron steamship. Messrs. Cory's barge-building yard is a notable establishment, turning out, at present, nearly one barge per week, besides doing much in the way of repairing that roughly-used species of craft. It is quite a dockyard, on the scale of vessels carrying about ninety-five tons—a size demonstrated by experience as the most convenient for economising labour. To the uninitiated, the building of a coal-barge may appear a very rough, common piece of work; but this view is about as correct as the opinions of the uninitiated usually are. To the building of barges has been applied the system known as "diagonal;" first tried in the building of ships' boats. A barge is furnished with three skins. The outer one presents the ordinary appearance of planks laid lengthwise, but the two interior layers are diagonally opposed to each other, so as to produce a kind of diamond pattern, giving great elasticity and extraordinary powers of resistance to the craft. Various woods—English and American oak, elm, and pitch pine—enter into the composition of a barge, and there is a mighty sawing and steaming of planks into the required curves constantly going on. Rapid as is the production of barges at Messrs. Cory's yard, the demand fully keeps pace with the supply. This appears strange, as one would hardly expect coal-barges to wear out rapidly. The main reason appears to be the increase of business—due, in some measure, to the present tendency of trade to gravitate towards great houses, to the extinction of the smaller fry. In coals and wine, in "dry goods," and in beer, in farms, and in railways, fortune fights for the big purses, and leaves petty capitalists out in the cold. Whether this tendency of the age to abolish small proprietors, by converting a few of them into directors and managers, and reducing the remainder to clerkdom, be for the good of the world or not, is a question with which I will not undertake to deal just now. It will suffice to note the fact.

The growing wealth and population of London have played, perhaps, the principal part in the wonderful growth of the coal trade. Without citing ancient statistics, I may mention that, in the four years ending in 1872, the quantity of coal actually consumed in London increased by more than three-quarters of a million of tons, the total for 1872 being nearly six millions. Another curious fact is, that during the four years in question occurred not only the increase cited in gross consumption, but a very notable increase in the consumption per head, and this in spite of the high prices which ruled towards the end of that period. Thus, in the year 1869, when coal was sold retail at about twenty-five or twenty-six shillings per ton, Londoners consumed twenty-seven hundredweight per head; and in the year 1872, when prices varied from thirty-six to fifty-two shillings per ton, they actually burnt twenty-nine hundredweight per head of population!—a convincing proof, if any were needed, that, despite the halo which surrounds the "good old times," and the frantic shrieking of idle people with fixed incomes, the great bulk of the nation is getting better off every year.

THROUGH THE NIGHT.

A NOCTURN.

Beneath thy window, gleaming white
From out the gloom of clustering leaves,
I stand, and in the hush of night
Dreamland lies open to my sight,
Unslumbering fancy weaves
What wondrous visions! Could I bid
Those eyes, on which each curvéd lid
Lies like a folded leaf,
Look forth, what should they see of all
That doth my spirit thrill and thrall
To tears which bode not grief?

I might not slumber, such delight
Of memory did move my breast.
The siren Silence wooed to thought,
And with Sleep's poppied fingers fought,
Whispering that waking dreams are best
When Love is Lord of Night.
Thy lattice lured me. Here I stand,
One dew-wet rose within my hand,
Plucked from the spray that nods beneath
Thy window, which methought thy breath
Kissed last at our last parting. Lo!
It wakes such visions as no wand
Of wizardry might show.
Night-shadows part, I see the land
Which only dreaming love may know.
There gleam through rifts of golden mist
Skies like calm seas of amethyst,
Where no clouds sail, save only those
Which are as drifts of vaporous rose,
And hide no heart of storm.
There thine entrancing form
Seems native as the flowers. Do gleams
From its rare glory gild thy dreams,
Sweet soul whom I would shrine
In fadeless splendour? Doth such light
Illume the mysteries of thy night
As makes a heaven of mine?

Dear! I would sing no idle song
To love's oft-fingered lute.
Better its chords were wholly mute,
Than touched to tones less sweet and strong
Than spirit-strains may suit.
A lay less pure than earth's first night,
Less passion-warm than June's best rose,
Should never bid those eyes unclose.
Yet list to mine! Ah! see, a light
Breaks in the east. Mysterious train
Of visions will ye yet remain
To make day beauteous? Amaranth bowers,
Strong-pinioned hopes, and puréd powers,
Ripe bloom of blameless passion, lips
Stainless as blossoms, tearless eyes
Which know not shame's eclipse;
All shapes of dreaming love's delight,
Are ye but phantoms of the night?
Ah no!
All loveliest things are prophecies.
To strains, as sweet as low,
Of far-heard music moves my song.
List! for its tones to thee belong,
Its thoughts are all inspired by thee,
Dear lady of my dreams. Awake!
Look forth with dawn, and it shall take
More perfect melody.

THE RAJAH'S DIAMOND.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

When I left the Diamond Fields, my friend Bate owned one of the best claims in Number Three Road, New Rush. He had rank among those happy ones who kept a pint measure of big gems in their tent. These he would display from time to time, smoothing out the brilliant heap upon his table. Ruefully he displayed them, remembering what fine prices he had refused for the very worst in days of pride, before the panic. At prices now offered, Bate declined, with unnecessary emphasis, to sell, and he was fond of consulting me, as a man who had travelled East and West, as to places where would be found a good opening for trifles of the sort. "About India, now, for that chap?" he would say, holding up a great "macle" stone, like a crystal inkstand. "Or China for the yellow boy? Or Mexico, Borneo, Timbuctoo?" I advised him to sell for what prices he could obtain, or, if not, to rely only on the Indian market. The first counsel he would not hear of; the second he put in practice, when he had made his fortune, and had enjoyed a winter's hunting in the Shires. Persons who connect themselves with diamonds early learn to hold their tongues, and I have no information as to Bate's success in disposing of his treasures to Maharajah and Ranee, but I fancy it to have been satisfactory. He did not succeed, however, in clearing out his stock, and wandered farther East, towards China. We had often talked of Borneo, and on reaching Singapore it occurred to him to run over to Kuching. There is now an hotel in that secluded capital, and the residents showed their usual hospitality. At the end of three days an incident happened to him, which has happened to all other strangers on that coast, who presented the appearance of wealth.

One day, as he left the Treasury, where he had been calling, two Malays rose from beside the little bridge which spans the ditch—a lovely ditch, as I remember it, bordered with pink lotus, overhung by scarlet garlands of the shoe-flower, and studded with velvety rosettes of pistia. They went up to him at once and salaamed. He stood to talk, having naught else to do, in the pathway leading to the Court House. One Malay was evidently of some rank. He wore shirt, sarong, and trowsers of silk, rather frayed; his turban was of Persian cloth, and the kris, thrust in his girdle, had gold ornaments about the hilt. The other seemed to be a servant and interpreter. This latter spoke, whilst his comrade raised his hands gracefully, from time to time, in acquiescence and deprecation. The first words made Bate laugh, for the interpreter wished to know if he would buy a diamond? Such a form of salutation the digger had been hearing every hour for twelve months of his life on the other side the world. "I'd rather sell you one," said he, "but let's look at it."

The diamond, however, was not to be seen except on terms for which Bate's experience gave no parallel. A certain sum, which proved to be no less than thirty thousand dollars, must be lodged beforehand with the manager of the Borneo Company at Kuching, and it must be lodged in cash. No paper would do. "And what then?" asked Bate, laughing. Then, it appeared, the gem might be brought for inspection. It lay a long way off, and there were many dangers to encounter. The romance of the thing began to interest my friend. He asked a number of questions, to which the answers came straight enough. Not a sixpence need be disbursed, until the stone should actually lie in his own hands. The size of it, as near as Bate could judge, would come to close on a thousand carats. White, it professed to be, as the Star of South Africa, cut, or rather polished, in the native style. It belonged to a rajah, and had lain in his family for generations.

Up to this point nothing had happened, other than I or any Bornean traveller could have predicted. Those Malays have made the same proposal to every visitor for twenty years. The new feature of the story was Bate's conduct. He didn't laugh or turn away scornfully, but invited them to the hotel next day, resolving meanwhile to take advice.

The advice he got was the same given to others in like case. All in Sarawak, or indeed out of it, believe in the diamond; you will find a description of it, drawn on the mere credit of these emissaries, in the first book on precious stones coming under your hand. For two hundred years, ever since the Dutch first landed in Borneo, it has been talked of, and sought after, but never seen by white man. For, unless the traveller can lodge seven thousand five hundred pounds in cash with the Borneo Company, no chance has he of beholding the treasure. Bate had not seven thousand five hundred pounds in dollars at a moment's notice. He explained to the Malays, on their visit, that gentlemen travelling don't usually carry such a sum with them. "But," said he, "if you won't bring the diamond here, will you take me to the diamond?" This proposal startled them. They looked at each other, conferred eagerly, and made an appointment for next day. Bate took counsel again on this original idea. His acquaintances were unanimous that no danger of an ordinary sort could be feared in the adventure—no murder, nor robbery, nor wild beasts, for the belief had always prevailed that this rajah dwelt over the Sambas frontier, in Dutch territory, where also security is profound. But this might be error, and if his guides should lead him into the Sultan of Bruni's dominion, heaven help the traveller! But Bate was not daunted. The Malays agreed to take him, and he set out with delight.

So much of the following tale I can guarantee as if I had been present at the incidents, just as you might guarantee that if a man lived three days in Rome, somebody in the street would offer him a coin of Heliogobalus for sale.

With the two guides and a Kuching boy, lent to him, Bate set off up the Sarawak river. The stream appears to have been high, for they could follow its course two days. Water then failed, and the canoe was left at a Dyak house. By the suggestion of friends in the capital—where everyone felt deeply interested about his adventure—an ample store of tinned meats had been prepared, and there was other luggage, arms, and so on. More servants than the boy S'Ali had been strongly objected to by the Malays, nor did they look on even him with approval. Bate wondered how his stores were to be carried, but in an hour's time four sturdy little Dyaks came to be loaded up. The Englishman, cramped by two days' sitting in a canoe, which had also been his bed at night, would glady have rested in the big

Dyak houses. He describes them as much more comfortable, and much better furnished, than I remember them. But his resolution at starting had been to put himself wholly under his guides' advice, and the Diamond Fields are no bad school for teaching a man to bear discomfort. So they set off, though the sun was already low, upon a "batany path," such as he found all through his journey. This is a style of road-making peculiar to Borneo. When the Dyaks find communication needful between one point and another, they fell young trees in a straight line, lop off the crowns, and painfully hoist them upon tressels. Over stream and dell the timber track is carried, with never a handrail to grasp. The Dyak will stay to chaff a friend, or to choose a tempting bit of penang from his box, poised fifty feet above a raging torrent. Bate followed his guides gallantly, balancing himself with a rope which they stretched across the more dangerous parts.

At sunset another village was reached, when Bate was invited to pay the little coolies one shilling each, whereupon they went their way. Here also the Malays had evidently an acquaintance, shaking hands with the chief inhabitants, as they sat out on their verandah, to which one climbed by a pole aslant, for the house was raised on posts. I have seen such thirty feet high, but the Land Dyaks build commonly at much less elevation. The village has but one long roof; on one side is the verandah, backed by the private chambers, belonging one to each family. House fathers sleep in the verandah, which is sheltered by the roof; bachelors, widowers, and men of war have their own round building at the end, where they lie beneath the smoke-dried heads of former foemen, with arms at hand, ready for the night attack should it occur. Thither Bate was conducted, after supping in uncomfortable state on the verandah, with two hundred pairs of eyes fixed on him in silent awe, whilst the jaws of their proprietors ground betel-nuts with the regularity of so many mills.

Next day Bate started again, taking fresh coolies. Although this part is fairly peopled, and in six days of land travel they often passed a hamlet, or a "house," as we call it, without need of stopping, the Malays invariably dismissed one set of carriers, and took another. The Englishman delayed their progress a good deal, and often he felt inclined to regret his enterprise, for it tries the nerves, as I can testify, to balance yourself mile after mile, day after day, on hanging logs. On the eighth evening after they left Sarawak, Bate missed his chief guide. "He's gone ahead," remarked the interpreter. "To-morrow we get home." It then occurred to my friend that he had no notion of his whereabouts, excepting only that the course had been south-west. The interpreter could not, or would not, tell him more than just the fact that they stood on Dutch territory, six days' journey from Pontianak, from which fact Bate concluded that he must be nearly at mid-distance between sea and sea.

Next day, before the sun was hot, they reached a small clearing. A river ran down one side of it, and on the other stood an ancient house, raised on high posts, mouldy, weather-stained, and very ragged as to its thatch. The ground about it had once been tossed over in that careless fashion which Malays call gardening. All that ever comes of their industry is a score or two of sweet-smelling shrubs, which, once planted, grow in straggling luxuriance. Bate's heart failed him, looking at this scene. He had fancied all sorts of oriental magnificence environing the diamond, such as is beheld amongst the rajahs with whom he did business in India. But on view of that palace he exclaimed aloud, "It is a sell!"

Beneath the house stood a man so immensely fat, that ropes and pulleys only, as it seemed, could take him up the ladder. Very handsomely was he dressed in silk, and cloth of gold. Some fine uncut emeralds shone in the ivory hilt of his kris. The chief guide stood behind this personage. "It is the rajah!" was whispered in Bate's ear, "but call him Inchi Buyong," which means, being interpreted, Squire Bird. Bate happened to know the Malay titles, and the word Buyong he had heard fifty times on his journey when looking for game. The mystery of an incognito somewhat raised his hopes again.

Squire Bird had a big, simple face, very yellow, and very pock-marked, pendulous of cheek, small-featured, and merry-looking. He came forward and shook hands, laughing, with many compliments, which the interpreter translated. Bate was smilingly motioned to ascend the ladder. He did so in gleeful haste, to watch the "getting upstairs" of that monstrous roll of flesh. But on reaching the top a vision appeared which struck him motionless. Bate calls it a vision. He was always susceptible. I have no doubt the girl was pretty enough—Malays of high class often are. Her skin, says Bate, was palest bronze; her eyes so large, so liquid, and so innocent, that "in looking at them a man felt all the sin he had ever done, and bitterly repented it on the spot." He proceeds to state that "her little mouth was purple as a pomegranate, and her teeth like frozen dewdrops." Clothed in robes of silk, homespun, such as our looms cannot touch for grace or softness, she leaned against the door-jamb; her upper robe was bound above the bosom, under the arms. Bate cannot describe the costume, but there were folds of blue, and black, and red, all gleaming and shimmering with gold; and beneath the lowest edge such tiny bronze-like feet peeped out, as Europeans may imagine but never see. Sandals she wore, with a little emerald knot between the great and the second toe.

Bate stood and stared, till the vision, rippling into a smile, raised both hands above her head and bowed, with the little henna-stained palms turned outward. For Malays of rank, male or female, practise all customs of their Arab teachers, saving only the veil. After her bow of welcome, the girl ran lightly past, to help her large parent on his toilsome climb. More lovely still, more of a vision than before, Bate thought her, as she stood in the sunlight, gracefully bent over the ladder, warning and encouraging in soft Malay, and laughing gently. She had placed one little foot on the ladder; diamonds and emeralds gleamed upon each toe, but Bate thought it shameful to hide such perfection, even with jewels. The light wind stirred her hair, which hung to the very ground, and shook perfume from the flowers with which it was bedecked. Meanwhile, amid grunts and heavy breathing, with breathless shouts from the retainers shoving below, the rajah clambered up. Then his big head appeared, smiling anxiously at the girl, and one of her tiny hands vanished in his monstrous clutch. With teeth firmly clenched, but still with merry laughter in her eyes, she leaned back and dragged. Bate sprang to her assistance—they pushed vigorously below—the rajah panted and choked, though smiling still—and then the verandah shook beneath his ponderous tread. Evidently, it was no small event for this rajah to descend to mother earth; his daughter welcomed him as one who comes from a desperate enterprise. Bate, who is poetic, as I said, almost wished himself a half-ton weight, to be petted like that old gentleman. They all went together into the house, where the rajah sat beaming and catching breath, whilst his servants—he had at least a score—squatted about him, or walked stooping, as is Malay fashion to signify respect. The vision had disappeared, but she came back to wait upon her father at the mid-day meal, which consisted of prawn-curry, "slippery go-downs," fried fern, and boiled capsicums. Then everybody went to sleep. Towards sundown Bate strolled abroad with his gun, accompanied by the interpreter and some dozen retainers, who cut the throat of every bird he shot with religious exactitude. He came back to find the rajah smiling as placidly as before, and supper ready. Then he was conducted to a mouldy room for the night. Not a word did anybody say about the diamond, but this silence Bate understood. In fact, he had been used to practise just the same tactics, when he had a "buyer" in his own tent.

Next day again there was no talk of the diamond. The fat rajah seemed content to sit smiling on his chair through the sultry hours, surrounded by squatting subjects, who played chess upon a board chalked out on the rotting floor. He liked to have Bate in view, feeling plainly disappointed when he left his sight. My friend was still patient, for the daughter came and went silently, quite unembarrassed, but as well aware as girl could be that she might boast an "orang putih" amongst her admirers. That sweltering day passed like the other, and a third after it. Then, in the evening, the interpreter came mysteriously, as they returned from shooting: "Inchi Buyong is satisfied," quoth he. "To-morrow, before daylight, his daughter will take you to see the diamond."

This delightful prospect of a tête-à-tête with a young lady, who could not understand a word he said, caused Bate such natural perturbation, that he missed several sentences of the interpreter's broken speech. When he listened again, the Malay was saying, "The governor of Sambas or Pontianak would give five hundred thousand dollars in silver at any time; but Inchi Buyong will never sell to a Dutchman. His grandfather's grandfather made a vow, and whilst they tortured him to death, he cursed the son of his who sold the diamond to a Hollander." Bate listened eagerly now, for this sounded like business indeed. The Malay went on to state that everyone of the rajah's ancestors had died a violent death, guarding the diamond. Their lands had been all taken from them and their title proscribed. Farther and farther they had moved into the woods, with a few faithful retainers, dogged in their oriental loyalty. The rajah living had but one child. "You've seen her," said the Malay, and Bate coloured. He was anxious, therefore, to sell the heirloom, but not of course to a Dutchman, and to end his days in tranquillity. Open persecution had ceased in this last half century, but spies were always lying round. As the rajah's family had sworn not to sell, so there were great Dutch houses who had sworn to have the diamond. "Be sure they know your arrival in Sambas long before this time, and there may be trouble. But a friend of the Sarawak rajah, the 'baniak brani,' is not afraid, and our men will fight. No one knows, except the Inchi and his daughter, where the diamond lies. Before daylight you will be called."

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLII.

The night was dark and cheerless. The road from Ivy Lodge to Whitford was not lighted. At a long distance before her, Castalia saw a red, glowing speck, which she knew to be the lamp over the chemist's shop, kept by Mr. Barker, her landlord. After that, a few street lamps glimmered, and the town of Whitford had fairly begun.

It was not late, yet most of the shops were shut, and the streets were very silent and deserted. Castalia strained her eyes onward through the darkness, and presently saw her husband's figure come into the circle of faint light made by a street lamp, traverse it, and disappear again into the shade. She had walked so quickly, in her excitement, as to have overtaken him sooner than she had expected. Whither was he going?

She slunk along in the shadow of the houses, frightened at the faint sound of her own footfall on the flagstones, starting nervously at every noise, hurrying across the lighted spaces in front of the few shops that remained open, with averted face and beating heart, fearing to be noticed by those within. But never once did she falter in her purpose of following her husband. She would have been turned back by no obstacle, short of one which defied her physical powers to pass it.

Algernon was now nearing Maxfield's house. The shutters of the shop were closed, but the door was still open, and a light streamed from it on to the pavement. Castalia followed, watching breathlessly. Her husband passed the shop, went on a pace or two, stopped at the private door, and rang the bell. She could see the action of his arm as he raised it. The door was opened without much delay, and Algernon went in.

Castalia stood still, trying to collect her thoughts, and determine on her course of action. What should she do? Her husband might be an hour—hours—in that house. She could not stand there in the street. An impulse came upon her to make herself known—to go in and tax Algernon with perfidy and deception then and there. But she checked the impulse. It would have been a desperate step. Algernon might never forgive her. It might be possible for her to reach a pitch of rage and jealousy, which would make her deaf to any such considerations—careless as to the consequences of her actions, if she could but gratify the imperious passion of the moment. She was dimly conscious that this might be possible; but for the present she had sufficient control over her own actions to pause and deliberate. There she stood, alone at night, in Whitford High-street — stealthily, trembling, and wretched—she, Castalia Kilfinane! Who would believe it? What would her uncle feel if he could see her now, or guess what she was enduring?

The idea came into her mind—floating like a waif on the current of indignant misery that seemed to flood all her spirit—that there might be hundreds of human beings, whom she had seen and thought happy, smarting with some secret wound like her own, and living lives the half of which was never known to the world. Castalia had never been apt to let her imagination busy itself with the sorrows of others, and at this moment the conception had no softening effect. It only added an extra flavour of bitterness and rebellion to her sufferings. It was too cruel. Why should such things be? And what had she done to merit so much unhappiness? She shivered a little as a breeze from the river came bringing with it the clammy breath of the marsh mists.

How long Castalia remained standing at her post she could never reckon; she was conscious only of burning pain of mind, and of a determination not to shrink from her purpose because of the pain. A footstep came sounding along the quiet street, and startled her. She shrank back as far as she could, pressing her shoulder close against the wall, and uncertain whether to walk on or remain still. It was a man who came towards her, turning from a narrow street opening into the High-street, which Castalia knew to be Lady-lane. He walked with a very rapid step, hanging his head, and looking neither to the right nor to the left. Castalia was, perhaps, the only dweller in Whitford who would not have recognised the figure as being that of David Powell, the Methodist preacher.

As Powell neared Castalia, he seemed to become aware of her presence by some sixth sense, for to all appearance he had not looked towards her. The truth was, that all his outward perceptions were habitually disregarded by him, except such as carried with them some suggestion of helpfulness and sympathy. A fashionable lady might have stood facing him during a long sermon in chapel, or in the open fields, and (unless she had displayed signs of "grace") he would have taken no heed of her—would not have been able to tell the colour of her garments. But let the same woman be tearful, ragged, sick, or injured, and no observation could be more rapid and comprehensive than David Powell's, to convey all needful particulars of her state and requirements. So this night, as he passed along the quiet Whitford streets, the few persons he had met hitherto were to him as shadows. But when the vague outline of a woman's form made itself a blot of blacker shadow in the darkness, those accustomed sentinels, his senses, gave the spirit notice of a fellow-creature in want, possibly of bread, certainly of sympathy.

He stopped within a few paces of Castalia, and perceived by that time that she was well and warmly clad, and that her trouble, whatever it was, could not be alleviated by alms. In her desire to avoid notice, she shrank away more and more, almost crouching down against the wall. It occurred to Powell that she might be ill. "Are you suffering?" he asked, in a low musical voice. "Can I help you?"

Finding that she did not reply, he advanced a step farther, and was stretching out his hand to touch her on the shoulder, when, driven to bay, she raised herself up to her full height, and answered quickly and resentfully, "No; I am not ill. I am waiting for some one."

He stood still, irresolutely. Her voice and accent struck him with surprise. He recognised them as belonging to a person of a different class from any he had expected. How came such a lady to be alone at that hour, standing in the cold street? At length he said, gently, "If I may advise you, it would be well for you to go home. The person who keeps you waiting in the street in such weather, and at this hour, must surely be very thoughtless. Can I not assist you? I am David Powell, a poor preacher of the Word. You need have no fear of me."

"No; please to go away. I am not at all afraid. Go away, go away!" she added with an imperative emphasis, for she began to fear lest her husband should come out of the house, hear the sound of her voice, and find her there. Powell obeyed her, and walked slowly away. There was, in truth, so far as he knew, no reason to fear that any evil could happen to the woman in Whitford High-street, except the evil of standing so long in the cold, raw weather. It had now begun to rain; a fine drizzling rain, that was very chill.

When he had walked some distance along the High-street, and was close to the turning that led to Mrs. Thimbleby's house, he stopped and looked back. Almost at the same moment he saw a man come out of Maxfield's house, and advance along the street towards him. Then, at a rather long interval, the cloaked lady began to move onward also, but without overtaking the man, or apparently trying to do so. It was a strange adventure, and one entirely unparalleled in Powell's experience of the little town, and after he had reached his lodgings he could not, for a long time, divert his thoughts from dwelling on it.

Meanwhile Algernon, unconscious of the watcher behind him, proceeded straight onward to the post-office. Then he turned up the narrow entry, in which was the side door that gave access to his private office. Castalia did not follow him beyond the mouth of the entry. Standing there and listening, she heard the sharp sound of a match being struck, then the turning of a key, and a door softly opened and shut.

It then struck Castalia that this unexpected visit to the office afforded an opportunity for her to reach home, without her husband's discovering her absence. She had not considered before how this was to be accomplished; and, indeed, had Algernon returned directly to Ivy Lodge from Maxfield's house, it would have been impossible. She now saw this, and hastened back along the road, in a tremor at her narrow escape; for, although the impulse had crossed her mind to declare herself, and boldly enter Maxfield's house in quest of her husband, that was a very different matter from being discovered against her will. In the latter case she would, as she well knew, have been at an immense disadvantage with her husband, who, instead of being accused, would become accuser.

Nothing short, indeed, of the passion of jealousy within her would have given her strength to combat her husband.

"I could bear anything else! Anything else!" she said to herself. "But to be fooled and deceived, and put aside for that girl——!" A great hot wave of passion seemed to flow through her whole body, as she thought of Rhoda. "Let the servants see me! What do I care?" she said, recklessly. At that moment she would not have heeded if the whole town had seen her, and known her errand into Whitford, and its result. She rang loudly at the bell of Ivy Lodge, and walked in past the servant, with a white face and glittering eyes.

"Isn't master coming?" stammered the girl, staring at her mistress.

"I don't know. Go to bed. I don't want you."

There was something in her face which checked further speech on Lydia's part. Lydia was fairly frightened. She crept away to the garret, where Polly was already sleeping soundly, and vainly tried to rouse her fellow-servant, to feel some interest in her account of how missus had stalked into the house by herself like a ghost, and had ordered her off to bed, and to get up a discussion as to missus's strange goings on altogether of late.

Castalia went to her own room, uncertain whether to undress and go to bed, or to remain up and confront her husband, when he should return. One dominant desire had been growing in her heart for many days past, and had now become a force overwhelming all smaller motives, and drawing them resistlessly into its strong current. This dominant desire was to be revenged—not on her husband, but on Rhoda Maxfield. And it might be that by waiting and watching yet awhile, by concealing from Ancram the discovery she had that night made, she might be enabled more effectually to strike at her rival. If Ancram knew, he would try to shield Rhoda. He would put the thing in such a light before the world as to elicit sympathy for Rhoda and make his wife appear ridiculous or obnoxious. He had the gift to do such things when it pleased him. No; she would keep her own counsel yet awhile longer.

When Algernon came home about midnight, letting himself into the house with a private key, he found his wife asleep, or seeming to sleep, and congratulated himself on escaping the querulous catechism as to where he had been, and what he had been doing, which he would have to endure had Castalia been awake on his return. As he crossed the bedchamber to his dressing-room, she moved, and put up one hand to screen her eyes from the light.

"Don't let me disturb you, Cassy," he said. "I have been detained very late. I am going downstairs again—there is a spark of fire in the dining-room—to have one cigar before I turn in. Go to sleep again."

He bent down to kiss her, but she kept her face obstinately buried in the pillow. So he took her left hand, which hung down, and lightly touched it with his lips, saying, "Poor sleepy Cassy!" and went away.

And then she raised the thin left hand, on which her wedding-ring hung loosely, and passionately kissed it where her husband's lips had rested, and burst into a storm of crying, until she fairly sobbed herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"So you had that fine gentleman, Mr. Algernon—What-d'ye-call-it—Errington, here last evening?" said Jonathan Maxfield to his daughter, on his return from Duckwell.

"Yes, father; he had been before in the afternoon. He was very anxious to see you; but Aunt Betty told him you wouldn't be back until to-day."

"Very anxious to see me, was he? I have my own opinion about that. But, no doubt, he wants me to believe that he's anxious."

"He seems in a good deal of distress of mind, father."

"I daresay. And what about the mind of the folks as hold his promises to pay? Just so much waste paper, those are, I take it; I'd as lief have his word of honour myself. And most people in Whitford know what that's worth!"

"I think he has been very unfortunate, father."

"H'm! What worldly folks calls misfortin' is generally the Lord's dealing according to deserts. It's set forth in Scripture that the righteous man shall prosper, and the unrighteous be brought to naught."

"But—father, even good people are sometimes chastened by afflictions," said Rhoda, timidly.

Old Max knitted his brows.

"There's nothing," said he, "more dangerous than for the young and inexperienced to wrest texts; it leads 'em far astray. When that kind o' chastening is spoken of, it don't mean the sort of trouble as has fallen on young Errington. The Almighty has given every man reason enough to understand that, if he spends thirteenpence out of every shilling, he'll be beggared before the year's end. I don't believe in men being ruined without fault or foolishness of their own."

"He asked me if I—if you—if I thought——he asked me to ask you to have a little patience with him about some bills. I didn't know that he had any bill here; but he said you would understand."

"Aye, aye! I understand. It isn't bills for tea, and flour, and bacon, and such like. It's a different kind o' bills the young gentleman's been meddling with; and a fine hand he's made of it!"

"Couldn't you help him, father?"

Rhoda spoke pleadingly, but with the timidity which always attended her requests to her father, whose recent indulgence had never reached a point of weakness, and who clearly showed, in all his dealings with his daughter, that he was not carried away by his affection for her, but acted with the consciousness of a will unfettered by precedents, and perfectly able to choose its course, without regard to what other people might expect of him.

For herself, in pleading for Algernon, she was not moved by self-conscious sentimentality, neither did she suppose herself to be doing anything heroic. The peculiar tenderness she still felt for him was made up of pity and memory. The Algy she had loved was gone—had melted into thin air, like a dream under the morning sunlight. Mr. Errington, the postmaster of Whitford, and the husband of the Honourable Castalia Kilfinane, was a very different personage. Still he was inextricably connected in her mind with that bright idol of her childhood and her youth. His marriage had put all possibility of love-making between him and herself as much out of the question, to her mind, as if he had been proved to be her brother. Rhoda had read no romances, and she was neither of an innovating spirit nor a passionate temperament, and it is surprising what power a sincere conviction of the irrevocable and inevitable has to control the "natural feelings" we hear so much of! But she clung to a better opinion of Algernon than his actions warranted—as has been the case with many another woman—chiefly to justify herself for ever having loved him.

"Couldn't you help him, father?" she repeated, seeing that her father did not at once reply, but was sitting meditating, with a not altogether ill-pleased expression of face.

"Help him!" cried old Max. "Why should I help him? A reprobate, unregenerate, vain, ungrateful worldling! I did help him once, and earned much gratitude for my pains. And what a sneaking, poor, mean, pitiful fellow he must be to come here and whine to you! A poor, pitiful fellow! Talk of a gentleman! Yah!"

Old Max derived so much grim satisfaction from the contemplation of Algernon's pitiful behaviour that it seemed almost to soften him towards the culprit, in whom any glimpse of nobility would not have been very welcome to his enemy. When you hate a man on excellent private grounds, it is certainly unpleasant to see him displaying qualities in public which win admiration. And this aggravation was one which old Max had been suffering for some time, at the hands of the popular Algernon. His present money difficulties, combined with his unworthy methods of meeting them, at once gratified and justified Jonathan Maxfield's vindictiveness.

He gave forth the queer grunting noise that served him for a laugh, as he said, "And a lot o' good his fine marriage has done him! And his grand relations! I told him long ago that if he wanted help from such as them, he must ask it with a pocket full of money. Then he might ha' been uplifted into high places. And it wasn't only my own wisdom neither, though that might ha' been enough for such a half-fledged young cockerel as he was in them days, seeing it has been enough for his betters before now. I had the warrant of Scripture; for what says Solomon? 'Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.'"

Still Rhoda did not altogether despair of inducing her father to do something for Algernon. What that something might be, or how far it was possible for her father to assist young Errington, except by simply giving or lending him money, Rhoda did not know. Algernon in talking to her had spoken very glibly, but, to her, very unintelligibly, of bills which were in her father's hands; and had pointed out, with an air of candour and conviction, that it would be imprudent on Mr. Maxfield's part to drive matters to extremity. It had all sounded very convincing, simply from the tone in which it was said. Many of us are astonishingly uncritical as to the coherence and cogency of words, if they be but set to a good tune.

Algernon himself was rather hopeful since that interview with Rhoda. It could not be, after all, that Jonathan Maxfield would actually cause him, Algernon Errington, any personal inconvenience for the sake of a sum which was really a mere trifle to Maxfield, and which appeared very trifling to Algernon, under every aspect except that of being called upon to pay it.

He had learned not long previously that certain bills he had given, backed by the name of that solid capitalist, the Honourable Jack Price, had found their way into old Max's hands. This startled him considerably, for he had no reason to count on the old man's forbearance. The time was drawing nigh when the bills would become due.

About a month ago some other bills had fallen due, and had been duly honoured. They had been given to a London wine merchant, who would certainly not have scrupled to take any strong measure for getting his money. And even the name of Jack Price was no talisman to charm away this grasping tradesman's determination to be paid for goods delivered; the wine merchant in question doing a large City business, and feeling no anxiety as to the opinion entertained by the Honourable Mr. Price's fashionable connection about himself or his wares. Under the pressure of this disagreeable conviction, the money had been found to honour the bills held by the wine merchant.

For the discharge of the liabilities represented by the bills now in Maxfield's hands, Algernon had reckoned on Castalia's extracting some money from her uncle. Algernon did not abandon the hope that she might yet succeed in doing so. Castalia must be urged to make new and stronger representations of their necessities to Lord Seely. But it could not be denied that my lord's last letter had been a very heavy blow; and that, moreover, a number of slight embarrassments, which Algernon had hitherto looked on as mere gossamer threads, to be broken when he pleased, had recently exhibited a disconcerting toughness, and power of constraining his actions and destroying his comfort.

The thought not infrequently occurred to him that, if he were alone in the world, unhampered by a wife who had no flexibility of character, and who had recently displayed a stubborn kind of obtuseness, showing itself in such remarks as that if they had not money to pay for luxuries, they must do without luxuries, and that if they were poor, it would be better to seem poor, and the like dull commonplaces, which were peculiarly distasteful to Algernon's vivacious intelligence—if, he thought, he had no wife, or a different wife, things would undoubtedly go better with him. He was too quick not to perceive that his marriage, far from improving his social position, had been eminently unpopular amongst his friends and acquaintances. To be sure he had never intended to return to Whitford after allying himself with the family of Lord Seely. He had meant to shake the dust of the sleepy little town from his feet for ever. He reckoned up the advantages he had expected to gain by marrying Castalia, and set the real result against each one in his mind.

He had expected to get into the Diplomatic Service. He was a provincial postmaster!

He had expected to live in some splendid metropolis. He found himself in the obscure town which, of all others, he wished to avoid!

He had expected to be courted and caressed by wealthy, noble, and distinguished persons. He was looked coldly or shyly upon by even the insignificant middle-class society of a county town!

All this seemed peculiarly hard and unjust, because Algernon had always intended to bear his honours gracefully, without stiffness or arrogance. He would cut nobody; he would turn the cold shoulder to nobody. He had pictured himself, sometimes, making a meteoric reappearance in Whitford; flashing with brief brilliancy across the horizon of that remote neighbourhood; affably shaking hands with old acquaintance; occupying the best rooms in the Blue Bell, and scattering largesse among the servants; or rattling through the streets side by side with some county magnate, whose companionship should by no means chill his recognition of such local stars of the second or third magnitude as the Pawkinses of Pudcombe Hall. He was inclined by taste and temperament to be thoroughly "bon prince."

Such fancies may seem childish, but it was a fact that Algernon had indulged in them. With all his tact, he had a considerable strain of his mother's Ancramism in his blood. And the contrast between those former day-dreams and the present reality was so terrible, so mortifying, so ridiculous (direst and most soul-chilling word of all to Algernon!) that he was unable to face it. Some way out must be found. It was impossible, on any tenable theory of society, that he should be permanently consigned to oblivion and the daily round of inglorious duties.

As to what Lord Seely said about meriting advancement by diligence, and working for ten or fifteen years, it seemed to Algernon pretty much like exhorting a convict to step his daily round of treadmill in so painstaking a manner, as to win the approbation of the gaol authorities. What would he care for their approbation? It was impossible to take either pride or pleasure in working out one's penal sentence.

Algernon felt very bitter against Lord Seely as he pondered these things, and not a little bitter against Castalia, who had, as it were, bound him to this wheel, and had latterly added the sting of her intolerable temper to his other vexations. Fate had used him despitefully. He seemed to consider that some gratitude was due to him on the part of the supernal powers for his excellent intentions—he would have borne prosperity so well! A feeling grew upon him, which would have been desperation, but for his ever-present, instinctive efforts not to hurt himself.

On the morning after the visit to Maxfield's house—of which Castalia had been an unseen witness—Algernon went to the post-office somewhat earlier than usual. As he reached it a man was coming out, who scowled upon him with so sullen and hostile a countenance, that it affected him like a blow. He was, on the whole, in better spirits on this special morning than he had been for some time past. Not that he was habitually depressed by his troubles, but there was a certain apprehension and anxiety in his daily life which flavoured it all unpleasantly. But on this morning he was, for various reasons, feeling hopeful of at least a reprieve from care, and the man's angry frown not only hurt but startled him.

"Who is that fellow who has just gone out?" he asked of Gibbs, entering the office by the public door instead of his own private one, in order to put the question.

"That is Roger Heath, the man who has lost his money-letter."

"An uncommonly ill-looking rascal, I take leave to think!"

"Ahem! He is a decent, God-fearing man, sir, I believe; but at present he is wrath, and not without some excuse, either. He tells me he has written to the head office——"

"And what then?"

"And has been told that due inquiries will be made, of course."

"And what then?"

"Why then—I suppose that's the last he'll hear of it."

Algernon lightly flicked a white handkerchief over his face and bright curling hair, filling the close little office with a delicate perfume as he said, "So there's an end of that!"

"An end of it, I suppose, so far as Heath is concerned. But I doubt we shall hear more of the matter in the office."

Algernon paused with his hand on the lock of the door leading to his private room. He kept his hand there, and scarcely turned his head as he asked, "How so?"

Mr. Gibbs shook his head, and began to expatiate on the singular misfortunes which had been accumulated on the Whitford Post-office, and to hint that when two or three suspicious cases had followed each other in that way, an office was marked by the superior authorities, and means were taken to discover the culprit.

"Means! What means?" said Algernon, carelessly. "You said yourself that it was next to impossible to trace a stolen letter. And, really, if people will be such idiots as to send money by post without precaution, in spite of all the warnings that are given to them, they deserve to lose it!"

"That may be, sir. Still, of course, it is no light matter to steal a letter. And as to the means of tracing it, why I have heard of trap-letters being sent, containing marked money."

The handle clicked, the door was opened

and sharply shut again, and the Whitford postmaster disappeared into his private room.

It was more than an hour before Algernon reappeared in the outer office. He advanced towards Gibbs, and leaning on his shoulder with great affability, said to him in a low voice, "You've no suspicion of any one about this place, eh? The old woman that cleans the office, that boy Jem, no suspicion of anybody, eh? Oh! well I'm excessively glad of that! One hates to be distrustful of the people about one."

Gibbs shook his head emphatically and decisively. "No one has access to the office unless in my presence, sir; not a creature."

"The fact is," said Algernon, slowly, "that I have missed one or two papers of my own lately; matters of no consequence. God knows why any one should have thought it worth while to take them! But they're gone."

Gibbs looked up with serious alarm in his face.

"Dear me, sir!" he exclaimed; "dear me, Mr. Errington! I wish you had mentioned this before."

"Oh well, you know, I thought I might be mistaken. I hate being on the watch about trifles. But, latterly, I am quite sure that papers have disappeared from my secretaire."

"From that little cabinet with drawers in it, that stands in your room?"

"Exactly."

"But—I was under the impression that you kept that carefully locked!"

Algernon laughed outright. "What a fellow you are, Gibbs! Fancy my keeping anything carefully locked! The fact is, it is as often open as shut. Only a few days ago, for instance, Mrs. Errington mentioned to me that she found it unlocked when she was here——" He stopped, as if struck by a sudden thought, and turned his eyes away from Gibbs, who was looking up at him with the same uneasy expression on his face. "By-the-way, Mrs. Errington did not stay very long here, did she?" asked Algernon, with a degree of marked embarrassment very unusual in him. It was an embarrassment so ingeniously displayed, that one might almost have suspected he wished it to be observed.

"When do you mean, sir? Mrs. Errington comes very often; very often, indeed."

"Does she?—I mean—I mean the last time she was here. Did she stay long then?"

"N — no," answered Gibbs, removing his eyes from Algernon's face, and biting the feather of his pen thoughtfully. "At least I think not, sir. I cannot be sure. She very often does not pass out through my office, but goes away by the private door in the passage."

There was a pause.

"I really am very glad that you don't suspect any of the people about the place, Gibbs," said Algernon at length, rousing himself with some apparent effort from a reverie. "As long as I have any authority here, no innocent person shall be made unhappy for one moment by watchfulness and suspicion."

"That's a very kind feeling, Mr. Errington. But I shouldn't think an innocent person would mind being watched in such a case. For my own part, I hope we shall trace the matter out. It shan't be my fault if we don't."

"You are wonderfully energetic, Gibbs. An invaluable public servant. But, Gibbs, it will not, I think, be any part of your duty to mention to any one, at present, the losses I have spoken of from my secretaire. There is no reason, as yet, to connect them with the missing letters. I did not duly consider what I was saying. The papers, after all, were only private letters of my own, Gibbs. They concern no one but myself. They could have had no value for a thief, you know. I—I daresay I mislaid them, and never put them into the secretaire at all."

Algernon went away with downcast eyes and hurried step, and Mr. Gibbs stared after him with a bewildered gaze. Then slowly the expression of his face changed to one of consternation and pity. "Poor young man!" he exclaimed, half aloud. "That woman has been making free with his papers beyond a doubt! And he does his best to shield her. A worldly-minded, vain woman she is, that looks at us as if we were made of a different kind of clay from her. And they say she is furiously jealous of her husband. But this—this is serious! This is very serious, indeed. I am sorry for the young man with all my heart!"

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII. NEMESIS.

I ENTERED the Priory through the door that opened into the garden, and unobserved by any of its inmates. Indeed, of late months, no notice had been taken of any one's comings and goings below stairs, of which at one time Mrs. Raeburn's lynx eyes had been so observant. All her watching, all her solicitude, were now monopolised by her two patients; and as to the attorney and John, they had never given themselves any trouble about domestic affairs. What showed, among other things, the absence of supervision in the establishment was, that, though the dusk was now far advanced, the lamp in the hall was not lit. A light, however, streamed from the door of brother Alec's sitting-room, which stood ajar, doubtless that Mrs. Raeburn, who was sitting there, might hear the least summons from Gertrude's chamber. My darling was probably still asleep, and since Mr. Wilde had given directions that she should never be disturbed from slumber, this woman was waiting for her to awake, that she might administer her food—with the seeds of death in it. How terrible it all seemed! I almost wished that Mr. Wilde had adopted the alternative of which he had spoken, and sent the guardian of the law at once into that house of crime to purge it. But the wise doctor was, doubtless, right. As I stood in doubt whither to go, so that I might, unperceived, witness Mrs. Hopkins's arrival, the far-off noise of wheels struck on my ear. That was then the fly which I had seen standing at the doctor's door as I came out, with the nurse's luggage in it. Someone else had heard it too, for the light above gave a broader gleam, and on the opposite wall was shown a woman's shadow. I drew aside into the library, whence, from the place where I had witnessed Mrs. Raeburn despoil the sofa of its contents, I could see through the hinges of the door into the hall. As the wheels came nearer I heard a footstep on the stairs, and presently Mrs. Raeburn came into view; she held a candle high in her hand, which showed her features very distinctly. They were harsh and hard as usual, but in her eyes there was an indefinable dread. Little could she guess what sort of guest was about to arrive; and yet it was plain she had her apprehensions. To the guilty, whatever is strange has danger in it. When the carriage stopped without, she anticipated the summons of the bell by opening the door itself. "What is it?" I heard her say in her cold, sharp tones. The flyman's reply I did not catch, but only Mrs. Raeburn's answer.

"There must be some mistake, man."

"I am the nurse, madam," said a cheery, quiet voice, "sent by Dr. Wilde."

I expected an outburst, but Mrs. Raeburn said nothing. She simply withdrew into an angle of the wall close beside me, as though to shield her flickering candle from the wind, while the man brought in the luggage. The contrast between the looks of these two women was most striking. Nurse Hopkins, wholesome and apple-cheeked, seemed wholly occupied with checking off her little articles of property: box, bag, bundle, and umbrella; a pair of clogs, only one of which seemed to have arrived, gave her great disquietude. Mrs. Raeburn, on the other hand, never took her eyes off this unexpected guest, whom, to judge by her expression, she would not, if she could, have at once annihilated, but would have put to such slow and never-ending torments as theologians alone have imagined. A face like hers have I seen sculptured on a cathedral, as a gargoyle—malignant, impotent, damned. Impotent I said, yet something of power came into it when the driver, having been duly paid, turned, with a pull of the forelock to the lady of the house, to go.

"Stop!" said she. "Wait outside a minute; your fly may be wanted."

The man withdrew, and she closed the door on him.

"What is the meaning of your coming here, woman?" inquired she then of the new arrival. "It is not right that Mr. Wilde should have sent you without previous notice."

"He seemed afraid that he might be putting you out a bit," was the other's quiet reply; "but his letter, he said, would explain all. I was to give you this parcel with it."

The object in question was carefully wrapped up in brown paper, and had no distinguishable shape, but as Mrs. Raeburn took it in her hand it emitted a metallic sound. I saw she recognised it for what it was at once. If that sound had been her passing-bell she could not have looked more near to death than at that moment.

"Wait here," said she, in a low hoarse voice, "while I read the note."

She pushed open the library door, which swung against me as she did so, put the parcel down on the table, and opened the letter. I could no longer see her as she read it, but I heard her foot beating impatiently on the floor.

Then there was a long silence. I looked for some immediate catastrophe—that she should fall down dead on the spot, or turn upon the new arrival like a tigress; but presently her voice broke the silence, speaking with dry distinctness: "Mr. Wilde has explained matters, though I still think the intrusion unreasonable. He suggests that you should take your place at once in Miss Floyd's room; you may therefore as well do so."

What an effort it must have cost this woman to speak like that! There was not a tremor in her tone from first to last, but I noticed that her hand fell heavily on the table, perhaps to support herself, yet quite as probably clenched in rage.

"Very good, ma'am," returned nurse Hopkins from the hall. "Would you be so kind as to show me the way?"

"True; I had forgotten that you did not know it."

She passed out close beside me as before. There was a change in her face now; always cold and chiselled, her features had become fixed and rigid like those of a corpse. Her eyes, too, stared straight before her. It was a sight that I was doomed to see again, in illness and in dreams, for many a year.

The two women went upstairs together to Gertrude's room. To remain alone, awaiting I knew not what, except that it must needs have shame and terror in it, was no longer possible for me, and I betook myself to the office. John had gone away on business, and though expected home to dinner, had not yet returned. The clerks had left, it being after five o'clock, and the attorney was at work alone.

"Here is Thomas Idle!" exclaimed the attorney, jocularly, as I made my appearance. The title had not been unearned, but, on the other hand, the master had never put work in the way of his apprentice. He had wanted the premium and the annual stipend paid for my maintenance, but not my services; and his only object had been to make matters as pleasant to me as he could. He had had no sense of doing his duty by me. This struck me now, not for the first time, but with more conviction than heretofore. But our business connection was about to cease, as our friendly relations had long done; and looking on the attorney's smiling face, and hearing his genial tones—which had some mellowness still in them—I had not the heart to judge him harshly. He had behaved ill to me with respect to Gertrude, but I utterly absolved him from having had part or lot in his wife's murderous design against her, or any knowledge of so base a crime; and now, since it must needs be that he should come to know it, I pitied him.

"You have seen Wilde, have you not, my lad?" he went on, in a more cheerful voice than I had heard from him for many a day, the two hundred and fifty pounds he had received from brother Alec that morning (for the latter made his quarterly payments, as John told me, to Mark himself—not to his wife) having, doubtless, acted as a tonic.

"Yes, sir; I saw him when he had paid his visit."

"And what report does he give of the patient?"

"Gertrude is no better."

"That surprises me. Mrs. Raeburn thought there was a decided improvement; so much so that it left her free to attend on Alec, else John could scarcely have been spared to-day. I heard wheels at the front-door just now, and thought he had come back. Who was it?"

"It was a nurse that Mr. Wilde has sent for Gertrude."

"A nurse? Well, that is the best news I have heard this long time." He rose, went to the fire and rubbed his hands, as he was wont to do when pleased. "I have proposed it myself a dozen times, but my wife wouldn't hear of it. She thinks she can do everything herself, you know; but, of course, the doctor's recommendation is final. Has Mrs. Raeburn seen her?"

"She is with her now in Gertrude's room."

"Then there is nobody with Alec, eh? Well, I must go up myself."

It was idle to offer to be his deputy, I knew, and he went up.

I remained in the office alone, trying, very unsuccessfully, to fix my thoughts on my work, till after awhile John came in. He had been out Morecambe Bay way, drawing up an old man's will. He was cold, he said, and very sharp set. Why was not dinner served? Where was the governor? Having no appetite myself, I had not thought about dinner, but I now perceived that it was long past the hour for that meal.

"Your father is waiting in your uncle's room until your mother relieves guard, I believe," said I.

"I'll go and fetch him down," answered he. "All's well, I hope, Sheddon?" He said this carelessly just as he was about to leave the room, yet waited at the door, it seemed to me with some anxiety, for my reply. Had he any suspicion, I wondered, that things might not be well? Was it possible that this once light-hearted joker was cognisant of his mother's infamous scheme? He had altered strangely of late; "sobered down," as the neighbours termed it. Was that because the weight of evil conscience was oppressing him, and had damped all merriment? No: to Gertrude he had always behaved with peculiar kindness, after his rough fashion; and if without much principle, was, I felt, incapable of a cruelty to anyone, far less to her.

"All is much as usual, John, except that Mr. Wilde has sent a nurse to attend on Gertrude."

"I am glad to hear it," said he. "She ought to have come long ago. It was only my mother's cheeseparing that put it off."

This in his old vehement tone, which he was wont to use when speaking of that subject. That alone would have convinced me, had I needed conviction, of his ignorance of what was going on.

Presently he returned with his father, and we sat down to table. For a wonder, there were two dishes, though not very luxurious ones: hashed bullock's heart and boiled rabbit; the latter looking very skinny and cat-like, by reason of its insufficient covering of onions.

Some people have a memory for the details of feasts, and I shall remember those two dishes as long as I live.

"Ugh!" said the attorney, turning the rabbit over with his fork. "I wonder which your mistress would prefer of these two dainties. Go up and ask her, Jane; she is with Miss Floyd."

I heard Jane's footsteps in the room above; then crossing the passage to brother Alec's room; then back again to that of Mrs. Raeburn.

I could not swallow a morsel: I seemed to be all ear—to have no other sense than that of hearing. Some catastrophe, I felt, was imminent. One thing only gave me comfort: the nurse, I knew, was with Gertrude.

"What can that girl be about? This infernal stuff is getting cold!" exclaimed the attorney. "What's that?"

It was a scream that reverberated through the house. All three of us rose to our feet. John and I were on the stairs in an instant, but he was ahead of me, and ran straight up to his uncle's sitting-room, the door of which stood open, doubtless left so by the maid. It did not seem to me that the scream had come from that direction, and I was right. It was now repeated from Mrs. Raeburn's own apartment.

"Heaven grant that the double doors will keep it from Gertrude's ears," was my silent prayer, as I ran in. The servant-girl was kneeling on the floor, wringing her hands over the prostrate body of her mistress. She had had a hard life of it under her iron rule, but the present piteous spectacle had thrust every sentiment but compassion out of her simple nature.

"She is dying, Mr. Sheddon!" cried she passionately. "Run, run for Mr. Wilde!"

One glance at the prostrate woman convinced me that no help for her lay in any skill of man. I had seen Death in the cottages of the poor at Stanbrook, and I recognised him here; yet I obeyed the girl's suggestion nevertheless. I was glad enough to escape from the scene on which John had already arrived, with scared, remorseful face. Perhaps he remembered how he had spoken of his mother but a few minutes back, poor fellow. At the bottom of the stairs, with one trembling hand upon the banister, one trembling foot upon the lowest step, stood the attorney; his face was almost as livid and lifeless as that which I had just left on the floor of his own bed-room.

"What is the matter? Is it Alec?" inquired he, in a quavering voice.

"It is not your brother, Mr. Raeburn; it is your wife that is taken ill," said I, as I flung the garden-door open and rushed away upon my urgent yet fruitless errand. As I neared Mr. Wilde's house, I saw the light in his parlour, that assured me of his presence, but my satisfaction was checked as soon as evoked, for at the same instant I remembered what he had enjoined on me. If Miss Floyd needed assistance, I was to fetch him, but if Mrs. Raeburn required medical aid—and how should he have guessed she would?—I was to call in other help than his. I hesitated, with my hand upon the bell; but calling to mind how sagacious a man he was, and had proved himself to be in this very instance, I resolved to obey his directions, and dashed away to Messrs. Bell and Doldrum's. The second member of the firm was at home, and to him, as well as my scarcity of breath permitted, I stated what had happened in a few words.

"I see, I see," said Dr. Doldrum, fingering his double eye-glasses; "it must be an urgent case."

"It is a matter of life and death, sir. For Heaven's sake, come at once!"

"I should be very glad, my dear young sir, very glad, you know," was his hesitating reply. "But this is one of Mr. Wilde's patients. The etiquette of our profession forbids my attendance; unless, indeed, Mr. Wilde were out."

"I was especially directed to send for you, sir," insisted I. "Mrs. Raeburn has never been professionally attended by Mr. Wilde, though Miss Floyd has been so."

"That alters the matter. Yes, yes, I'll come." Dr. Doldrum was very stout, and consumed a minute, even with my assistance, in the feat of getting into his great-coat. He had no more notion of hurry than a hippopotamus; he walked like a tortoise, and even at that moderate rate of movement panted like a grampus; yet, with all that, he was full of talk.

"Poor Mrs. Raeburn! Dead, you think? Well, that is a matter for scientific inquiry. Yet I should not be surprised. My diagnosis of the lady—all guess work, of course; but then experience makes one guess so much—is that the sword has worn out the scaffold—scabbard I mean. A very active and masterful woman. The heart has gone wrong; you may take my word for it. It is a mistake to suppose that fat people only are subject to such things; a great mistake. You are sure it was not a fainting fit, by-the-by?"

"Quite certain," said I. "I have seen people faint."

"Just so; and, besides, she was not a woman to faint—if my diagnosis is correct—at anything. This will make the third sick person in your house (even if it be no worse), will it not, young gentleman?"

"Yes," said I. "Miss Floyd and Mr. Alexander Raeburn have been invalids this long time."

"Aye, aye, and Mr. Wilde attends on both of them?"

"No, not on Mr. Raeburn. He has declined to do so, on the ground that he can be of no use."

"You don't say so? Bless my soul!" Dr. Doldrum stopped short—his breath had been quite taken away by this, which was a fact altogether out of his professional experience. "Yet the resources of science are boundless," urged he.

"Let us get on."

If we had "got on" at railway speed it would have made no difference to the cause of our dispatch. In a few minutes after Dr. Doldrum went upstairs he returned again to the hall, where I awaited him; he was accompanied by John Raeburn, who looked very pale, but quite collected. "It is all over with my poor mother, Harry," said he, sadly, as I held out my hand to him in token of sympathy.

"Indeed, I feared as much, John."

"Yes, yes," sighed the doctor. "My diagnosis, though founded on slight opportunities of observation, Mr. Sheddon, has unhappily proved correct. It was the heart, as I foretold it would be. A common case, yet not less deplorable on that account. Mr. Raeburn is in a sad state up yonder."

"It is misfortune on misfortune, Dr. Doldrum," observed John, thoughtfully. "This catastrophe is only the climax of my poor father's sufferings. My uncle Alec and cousin Gertrude are both on the sick-list, and a shock like this——"

"Just so," interposed the doctor. "Perhaps, before I go, it would be as well if I were to step up to Mr. Alexander and prescribe him something—I will not say consolatory, but that may tend to alleviate."

"No, no," John interrupted hastily; "he must not suspect—nor Gertrude either, for that matter—that this terrible event has happened; that is what I wished to have a few words with you about, doctor. A coroner's inquest in this house would not only be painful—I don't put it upon that ground at all—but perhaps fatal to one of those who are still left to us. You say very truly it is a common case. I hope, therefore, that no public inquiry will be necessary."

"That is a question for the coroner, Mr. John; but I will write a line to him on the matter. Yes, yes; I'll let you know at once. Perhaps I had better look in to-morrow, at all events, and see your father. We must take care of him all the more, you know, since you have now but one parent."

"By all means," answered John, in an absent tone. His mind seemed to be quite cured of its levity, and to be full of thought as well as sorrow.

THUNDERS OF APPLAUSE.

Addison devotes a number of the Spectator to a description of The Trunkmaker in the Upper Gallery—a certain person so called, who had been observed to frequent, during some years, that portion of the theatre, and to express his approval of the transactions of the stage by loud knocks upon the benches or the wainscot, audible over the whole house. It was doubtful how he came be called the Trunkmaker: whether from is blows, resembling those often given with a hammer in the shops of such artisans, or from a belief that he was a genuine trunkm ker, who, upon the conclusion of his day's work, repaired to unbend and refresh his mind at the theatre, carrying in his hand one of the implements of his craft. Some, it is alleged, were foolish enough to imagine him a perturbed spirit haunting the upper gallery, and noted that he made more noise than ordinary whenever the ghost in Hamlet appeared upon the scene; some reported that the trunkmaker was in truth dumb, and had chosen this method of expressing his content with all he saw or heard; while others maintained him to be "the playhouse thunderer," voluntarily employing himself in the gallery, when not required to discharge the duties of his office upon the roof of the building. The Spectator, holding that public shows and diversions lie well within his province, and that it is particularly incumbent upon him to notice everything remarkable touching the elegant entertainments of the theatre, makes it his business to obtain the best information he can in regard to this trunkmaker, and finds him to be "a large black man whom nobody knows;" who "generally leans forward on a huge oaken plant," attending closely to all that is occurring upon the stage; who is never seen to smile, but who, upon hearing anything that pleases him, takes up his staff with both hands, and lays it upon the next piece of timber that stands in his way, with exceeding vehemence; after which, he composes himself to his former posture, till such time as something new sets him again at work. Further, it was observed of him that his blows were so well timed as to satisfy the most judicious critics. Upon the expression of any shining thought of the poet, or the exhibition of any uncommon grace by the actor, the trunkmaker's blow falls upon bench or wainscot. If the audience fail to concur with him, he smites a second time, when, if the audience still remain unroused, he looks round him with great wrath, and administers a third blow, which never fails to produce the desired effect. Occasionally, however, he is said to permit the audience to begin the applause of their own motion, and at the conclusion of the proceeding ratifies their conduct by a single thwack.

It was admitted that the trunkmaker

had rendered important service to the theatre, insomuch that, upon his failing to attend at his post by reason of serious illness, the manager employed a substitute to officiate in his stead, until such time as his health was restored to him. The incompetence of the deputy, however, became too manifest; though he laid about him with incredible violence, he did it in such wrong places, that the audience soon discovered he was not their old friend the real trunkmaker. With the players, the trunkmaker was naturally a favourite; they not only connived at his obstreperous approbation, but cheerfully repaid such damage as his blows occasioned. That he had saved many a play from condemnation, and brought fame to many a performer, was agreed upon all hands. The audience are described as looking abashed if they find themselves betrayed into plaudits in which their friend in the upper gallery takes no part; and the actors are said to regard such favours as mere "brutum fulmen," or empty noise, when unaccompanied by "the sound of the oaken plant." Still, the trunkmaker had his enemies, who insinuated that he could be bribed in the interest of a bad poet, or a vicious player; such surmises, however, the Spectator averred to be wholly without foundation, upholding the justice of his strokes and the reasonableness of his admonitions. "He does not deal about his blows at random, but always hits the right nail upon the head. The inexpressible force wherewith he lays them on sufficiently shows the strength of his convictions. His zeal for a good author is indeed outrageous, and breaks down every fence and partition, every board and plank, that stands within the expression of his applause."

Moreover, the Spectator insists upon the value and importance to an audience of a functionary thus presiding over them like the director of a concert, in order to awaken their attention, and beat time to their applauses; or "to raise my simile," Addison continues, "I have sometimes fancied the trunkmaker in the upper gallery to be, like Virgil's ruler of the winds, seated upon the top of a mountain, who, when he struck his sceptre upon the side of it, 'roused a hurricane and set the whole cavern in an uproar.'"

In conclusion, the writer, not caring to confine himself to barren speculations or to reports of pure matter of fact, without deriving therefrom something of advantage to his countrymen, takes the liberty of proposing that upon the demise of the trunkmaker, or upon his losing "the spring of his arm" by sickness, old age, infirmity, or the like, some able-bodied critic should be advanced to his post, with a competent salary, and a supply, at the public expense, of bamboos for operas, crab-tree cudgels for comedies, and oaken plants for tragedies. "And to the end that this place should be always disposed of according to merit, I would have none preferred to it who has not given convincing proofs both of a sound judgment and a strong arm, and who could not upon occasion either knock down an ox, or write a comment upon Horace's Art of Poetry. In short, I would have him a due composition of Hercules and Apollo, and so rightly qualified for this important office that the trunkmaker may not be missed by our posterity."

Addison's paper doubtless possessed an element of fact and truth, enriched by the fancifulness peculiar to the writer. It was his manner thus to embroider commonplace; to enhance the actual by large additions of the ideal. There probably existed such a personage as the Trunkmaker; some visitor to the upper gallery was in the habit of expressing approval by strokes of his cudgel upon the wainscot; and his frequent presence had obtained the recognition of the other patrons of the theatre. It was an easy and a pleasant task to Addison to invest this upper gallery visitor with special critical qualities, to attribute to his "oaken plant" almost supernatural powers. In any case, the trunkmaker was a sort of foreshadowing of the "claqueur." It was reserved for later times to organise applause and reduce success to a system. Of old, houses were sometimes "packed" by an author's friends to ensure a favourable result to the first representation of his play. When, for instance, Addison's Cato was first produced, Steele, as himself relates, undertook to pack an audience, and accordingly filled the pit with frequenters of the Whig coffee-houses, with students from the Inns of Court, and other zealous partisans. "This," says Pope, "had been tried for the first time in favour of the Distressed Mother (by Ambrose Phillips), and was now, with more efficacy, practised for Cato." But this was only an occasional "claque." The "band of applauders" dispersed after they had cheered their friend, and achieved their utmost to secure the triumph of his play. And they were unconnected with the manager of the theatre;

they were not his friends; still less were they his servants, receiving wages for their labours, and bound to raise their voices and clap their hands, in accordance with his directions. For such are the genuine "claqueurs" of to-day.

Dr. Véron, who has left upon record a sort of secret history of his management of the Paris Opera House, has revealed many curious particulars concerning "les claqueurs," adding a serious defence of the system of artificial applause. The artistic nature, the doctor maintains, submitting its merits to the judgment of the general public, has great need of the exhilaration afforded by evidence of hearty approval and sympathy; the singer and the dancer are thus inspired with the courage absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of their professional feats; and it is the doctor's experience that whenever a song or a dance has been redemanded by the audience, the dance has been better danced, and the song better sung, the second time of performance than the first. Hence there is nothing harmful, but rather something beneficial, in the proceedings of "les claqueurs." Every work produced at the theatre cannot be of the first class, and legitimately rouse the enthusiasm of the public; every dramatic or lyrical artist cannot invariably, by sheer force of talent, overcome the coldness, the languor, or the indifference of an audience; yet the general effect of the representation would suffer much if all applause, including that of a premeditated and, indeed, purchased kind, were entirely withheld; the timid would remain timid, talent would remain unrecognised, and, therefore, almost unrevealed, if no cheering was heard to reassure, to encourage, to kindle, and excite. The suggestion that the public would supply genuine applause if only the "claqueurs" were less liberal with the spurious article, Dr. Véron rather evades than discusses.

The chief of the "claqueurs" in Dr. Véron's time was a certain M. Auguste, of Herculean form and imposing address, well suited in every respect for the important post he filled. He was inclined to costume of very decisive colours—to coats of bright green or reddish-brown—presumably that, like a general officer, his forces might perceive his presence in their midst by the peculiarity, if not the brilliance, of his method of dress. Auguste was without education—did not know a note of music; but he understood the audience of the Opera House. For long years he had attended every representation upon its stage, and experience had made him a most skilful tactician. Auguste enjoyed the complete confidence of Dr. Véron. "Claqueur" and manager attended together the rehearsals of every new work, and upon the eve of its first performance held a cabinet council upon the subject. They reviewed the whole production from the first line to the last. "I did not press upon him my opinions," says Dr. Véron; "I listened to his; he appraised, he judged all, both dance and song, according to his own personal impressions." The manager was surprised at the justice of the "claqueur's" criticism by anticipation; at his ingenious plans for apportioning and graduating the applause. It was Auguste's principle of action to begin modestly and discreetly, especially at the opera, dealing with a choice and critical public; to approve a first act but moderately, reserving all salvoes of applause for the last act and the dénouement of the performance. Thus, in the last act he would bestow three rounds of applause upon a song, to which, had it occurred in the first act, he would have given but one. He held that towards the middle of a performance success should be quietly fostered, but never forced. For the "claqueurs" of other theatres Auguste entertained a sort of disdain. It was, as he averred, the easiest thing in the world to obtain success at the Opéra Comique, or the Vaudeville. The thing was managed there, not so much by applause as by laughter. There was the less need for careful management; the less risk of vexing the public by injudicious approbation. No one could take offence at a man for laughing immoderately; he was not chargeable with disingenuousness, as in the case of one applauding to excess. Occasionally, cries were raised of "À la porte les claqueurs;" but such a cry as "À la porte les rieurs," had never been heard. At the Opera House, however, there was no occupation for laughers; in the score of an opera, or in the plot of a ballet, appeal was never made to a sense of the mirthful. Then the opera public was of a susceptible, and even irritable nature; it might be led, but it could scarcely be driven; it could be influenced by polite and gentle means; it would resent active interference, and "a scene" might ensue—even something of a disturbance. But M. Auguste implored his manager to be easy on that score. Nothing of the kind should happen; he would prove himself deserving, worthy of his employer's confidence. "Only," said M. Auguste, "those fools, the paying public, certainly give us a great deal of trouble!"

The "chef de la claque" was, of course, supplied with admission tickets by the management, and these were issued according to an established scale. If the success of a work, already represented many times, showed signs of flagging and needed to be sustained, Auguste received some forty or fifty pit tickets; but in the case of a work highly approved by the public, and still attracting good houses, twenty, or even ten, tickets were held to be sufficient. But on the first production of an entirely new entertainment, at least a hundred tickets were handed to Auguste. There was then a meeting of the "claqueurs" at some appointed place—usually a wine-shop in the neighbourhood of the theatre—and the plan of action was arranged, the army of applauders organised and marshalled. Intelligent lieutenants, about ten in number, each in command of a detachment of the forces, were instructed how to deal with opponents, and to keep watchful eyes upon the proceedings of their chief. In addition to a money payment and their own entrance tickets, they were accorded other tickets, to be given only to friends upon whose fidelity they could rely. Certain of the "claqueurs" accepted outpost duty, as it were, and acted in isolated positions; others, and these the majority, took close order, and fought, so to speak, in column. In addition to his regular forces, Auguste engaged supernumerary and irregular troops, known to him as "sous-claqueurs," upon whose discipline and docility he could not wholly rely, though he could make them useful by enclosing them in the ranks of his seasoned soldiers. The "sous-claqueurs" were usually well-clothed frequenters and well-wishers of the Opera House, anxious to attend the first representation of the new work to be produced, and willing to pay half-price for their tickets, upon the condition that they placed their applause at the disposal of M. Auguste.

The "claqueurs" were admitted to the theatre and took their seats some time before the entrance of the paying public. M. Auguste had thus ample opportunity of deciding upon his strategic operations, of placing his advance guard, of securing the position of his main army, and of defending its flanks and rear. The paying public thus found itself curiously intermixed and imprisoned by these hosts of "claqueurs," and victory usually crowned the efforts of M. Auguste, who was careful to arrogate to himself the results of the evening's proceedings. "What a splendid success I achieved!" he would say; completely ignoring the efforts of composer, the artists of the theatre, and the manager, who were, perhaps, entitled to some share of the glories of the performance.

Auguste, as Dr. Véron relates, made his fortune at the opera. He was in receipt of annuities from several artists of established fame. Success could hardly be achieved without his aid. The friends, patrons, and family of a new artist, to ensure his or her success, invariably paid court and money to Auguste, the price of his services corresponding with the pretensions of the débutant. And then he undertook engagements of an exceptional kind, sometimes even to the prejudice of his manager. Artists required of him sometimes a sudden increase of their success—that, for a few nights only, an extraordinary measure of applause should reward their exertions. Their engagements were expiring or were about to be renewed; it was desirable to deceive both the public and the manager; the vital question of salary was under consideration; an increase of their emoluments was most desirable. So, for a while, the mediocre singer or dancer obtained from Auguste and his auxiliaries unusual favour, and the manager was induced to form very erroneous opinions upon the subject. Rumours, too, were artfully circulated to the effect that the performer in question had received liberal offers from England or Prussia; that his or her merits had roused the attention of rival impresarios; the Parisian manager was cautioned at all costs to retain in his theatre ability and promise so remarkable. But with the signing of a new engagement, at an advance of salary, came disenchantment. M. Auguste's services were now withdrawn, for the performer's object was attained; and the management for some time to come was saddled with mediocrity, purchased at a high price.

But little difficulties and deceptions of this kind notwithstanding, Dr. Véron approved the "claque" system, and constituted himself the friend and defender of Auguste. It was not only that Auguste was himself a very worthy person—an excellent father of a family, leading a steady and creditable kind of life, putting by for the benefit of his children a considerable portion of his large annual earnings as "chef de la claque"—but the advantages of artificial applause and simulated success seemed to Dr. Véron to be quite beyond question, while wholly justifiable by their results. The manager detected the "claque" system as a pervading influence in almost all conditions of life. To influence large bodies or assemblies, dexterity and stratagem he declared to be indispensably necessary. The applause exacted by Nero, when he recited his verses or played upon the lute, or Tiberius, posing himself as an orator before the senate, was the work of a "claqué," moved thereto rather by terror, however, than by pecuniary considerations. Parliamentary applause he found also to be of an artificial kind, produced by the spirit of friendship or the ties of party; and he relates how, when the Constitutionnel newspaper was under his direction, certain leading members attended at the printing-office to correct the proofs of their speeches, and never failed to enliven them at intervals by the addition of such terms as "Cheers," "Loud cheers," "Great cheering," "Sensation," "Excitement," &c. These factitious plaudits, tricks and manœuvres of players, singers, dancers, and orators, in truth, deceive no one, he maintained; while they make very happy, nevertheless, all those who have recourse to them.

As a manager, therefore, Dr. Véron invariably opposed the efforts made to suppress the "claqueurs" in the pay of the theatre. He admits that some times excess of zeal on the part of these hirelings brought about public discontent and complaint; but, upon the whole, he judged that they exercised a beneficial influence, especially in their prevention of cabals or conspiracies against particular artists, and of certain scandals attaching to the rivalry and jealousy of performers. And to M. Auguste he thus addressed himself: "You have a fine part to play; great duties to perform; put an end to quarrels; help the weak against the strong; never oppose the public; give over applauding at their bidding; present an example of politeness and decorum; conciliate and pacify; above all, prevent all hostile combinations, all unjust coalitions, against the artists on the stage, or the works represented."

Dr. Véron has said, perhaps, all that could be said for the "claque" system; but his plausible arguments and apologies will not carry conviction to every mind. There can be no doubt of the value, the necessity almost, of applause to the player, but one would much rather that the enthusiasm of an audience was wholly genuine, and not provided at so much a cheer, let us say, by the manager, or the player himself. "Players, after all," writes Hazlitt, "have little reason to complain of their hard-earned, short-lived popularity. One thunder of applause from pit, boxes, and gallery is equal to a whole immortality of posthumous fame." But if the thunder is but stage-thunder? If the applause is supplied to order, through the agency of a M. Auguste? Upon another occasion Hazlitt expresses more tenderness for the ephemeral glories of the actor's art. "When an author dies it is no matter, for his works remain. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up. The literary amateur may find employment for his time in reading old authors only, and exhaust his entire spleen in scouting new ones; but the lover of the stage cannot amuse himself, in his solitary fastidiousness, by sitting to witness a play got up by the departed ghosts of first-rate actors, or be contented with the perusal of a collection of old playbills; he may extol Garrick, but he must go to see Kean, and, in his own defence, must admire, or at least tolerate, what he sees, or stay away against his will." And Cibber, in his apology, has placed on record an elaborate lament, "that the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record; that the animated graces of the actor can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them; or, at least, can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestations of a few surviving spectators."

The complete suspension of applause, genuine or factitious, must result in the exceeding depression of the player. He must feel himself deprived of his proper sustenance; and something of dismay must possess him, when he finds that all his efforts move his audience in no way; that they are not "en rapport" with him; that while he labours they are listless. Henderson committed himself to the exaggeration that no actor could perform well, unless he was systematically flattered both on and off the stage. Liston, the comedian, found applause, of whatever kind, so absolutely necessary to him, that he declared he liked to see even a small dog wag his tail in approbation of his exertions. Mrs. Siddons complained of the inferior measure of applause that she obtained in the theatres of the provinces. At Drury-lane her grand bursts of passion were received with prolonged cheering and excitement, that gave her rest and breathing-time, and prepared her for increased efforts. The playgoers of York were at one time so lukewarm in their reception of popular players, that, at the instance of Woodward, Tate Wilkinson, the manager, called on the chief patrons of the theatre, and informed them that the actor was so mortified by their coolness, that he could not play nearly so well in York as in London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. The York audience benefited by the remonstrance, and on Woodward's next appearance, greatly to his delight, awarded him extraordinary applause.

Macready, in his Memoirs, relates that the practice of "calling on" the principal actor was introduced, at Covent Garden Theatre, on the occasion of his first performance of the character of Richard the Third, on the 19th October, 1819. It was the custom then for a subordinate actor to appear at the conclusion of the play and announce the representation to be given on the following night. But on this occasion Macready, at the suggestion of the stage-manager, undertook the duty, and his appearance had the effect of a "call." "In obedience," he writes, "to the impatient and persevering summons, I was desired by Fawcett to go before the curtain; and, accordingly, I announced the tragedy for repetition, amidst the gratulatory shouts that carried the assurance of complete success to my agitated and grateful heart." But while loving applause, as an actor needs must, Macready had little liking for such idle compliments as calls and recalls; heartily disapproved of them, indeed, when they seemed to him in any degree to disturb the illusion of scenic representation. Thus of his performance of Werner in 1845, he writes: "Acted very fairly. Called for. Trash!" Under date of December, 1844, he records: "Acted Virginius"—this was in Paris—"with much energy and power, to a very excited audience. I was loudly called for at the end of the fourth act, but could not or would not make so absurd and empirical a sacrifice of the dignity of my poor art." Three years later he enters in his diary: "Acted King Lear with much care and power, and was received by a most kind and sympathetic and enthusiastic audience . . . . I was called on, the audience trying to make me come on after the first act, but, of course, I could not think of such a thing." But these complimentary calls relate to the conclusion of an act when, at any rate, the drop-scene has fallen, hiding the stage from view, and when, for a while, there is a pause in the performance, a suspension of theatric illusion. What would Macready have said to calls while the dramatist still holds possession of the stage; while some necessary question of the play is in course of consideration—calls to the interruption of all dramatic interest, and the reduction of the characters in the drama to the merest lay-figures? Yet, in modern times, Charles Surface retiring, after the fall of the screen, and his futile effort to obtain an explanation of that catastrophe, has returned to bow to the pit, greatly to the embarrassment of his play-fellows. Ophelia, after tripping off insane to find a watery grave, has been summoned back to the stage, to acknowledge, sanely enough, by smiles and courtesies, the redundant applause of the spectators, greatly to the perplexity of King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, and Laertes, and seriously to the injury of the poet's work. And these are but samples of the follies of the modern theatre in this respect.

The calling for the dramatist of the evening is of foreign origin, as indeed are the majority of theatrical honours and compliments. The first dramatist called before the curtain in France was Voltaire, after the production of Merope; the second was Marmontel, after the performance of his tragedy of Dionysius. For some time our English playwrights were content to acknowledge from their private boxes the salutations and congratulations of their audience. What author first stepped from his box to the stage? If his name cannot now be ascertained, at least we have information concerning a dramatist perfectly willing to adopt such a course. To Talfourd, the representation of his dramatic works always afforded intense delight. He would travel almost any distance to see one of his plays upon the boards, no matter how humble the theatre. Macready has left on record curious particulars touching the first representation of Ion. "Was called for very enthusiastically by the audience, and cheered on my appearance most heartily. . . Miss Ellen Tree was afterwards called forward. Talfourd came into my room and heartily shook hands with me, and thanked me. He said something about Mr. Wallack, the stage-manager, wishing him to go on the stage, as they were calling; but it would not be right. I said, 'On no account in the world.' He shortly left me, and as I heard, was made to go forward to the front of his box, and receive the enthusiastic tribute of the house's grateful delight. How happy he must have been!" In 1838, concerning the first night of Sheridan Knowles's play of Woman's Wit, Macready writes: "Acted Walsingham in a very crude, nervous, unsatisfactory way. Avoided a call, by going before the curtain to give out the play; there was very great enthusiasm. Led on Knowles, in obedience to the call of the audience." But Knowles was not an author only; he was an actor also—he had trod the boards as his own Master Walter, and in other parts, although he was not included in the cast of Woman's Wit. No doubt, from Macready's point of view, this consideration rendered his case very different from that of Talfourd.

THE RAJAH'S DIAMOND.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

HERE was romance indeed! The tale of this poor rajah's persecution did not come fresh to Bate, for he had heard of it vaguely in Sarawak. By such means other great native houses have been forced to a "voluntary sale" of their old jewels; but this, the grandest of all, the largest and finest diamond in the world, as repute affirms, has lain safe in one family for ages beyond man's reckoning. It is said to be a secret tradition of Dutch governments in Borneo to get possession of it by any means, and there are merchants' houses which have had their eye on it from generation to generation. But Bate would of course have ridiculed the idea of any violent attempt to take it, on the part of civilised and Christian gentlemen in this nineteenth century. He never thought of such a thing, not even when the rajah lost his smile, and the ragged retainers brought out each his ancient gun, and snapped it off in the verandah, and reloaded carefully.

But there were other signs of anxiety in the house that night. Women servants whom Bate had not yet seen, save in a momentary glimpse of giggling mouth and flying petticoat, brought mats and curtains to the living room, and arranged them on the floor. The daughter, Gilumbaï, never left her father's side, and he sat with his big hand upon her neck. Hurry and bustle reigned over all the house, but those two sat quietly, waiting as it seemed.

After the evening meal, which bore token of the confusion ruling—for the capsicums were not half boiled, and but one sambal was served with the curry—half the retainers went out, armed to the teeth. One by one, at intervals, they entered the dim forest. "What child's play this is," said Bate to the interpreter.

"Wait!" he answered. "You will see! There are wild Dyaks all round us, but white men lead them on." Bate again said "Bosh!" and went to bed peevishly. He looked on all this melodramatic business as foil to the diamond. Use had knocked out of him all feeling of romance upon the subject of precious stones, and manœuvres which he regarded as "sellers' tricks" caused him only irritation. "I'd seen such a lot of that sort of thing," says Bate.

But I can avouch my own experience that it startles a man to be awoke at midnight, in an unknown jungle, by the sudden, sharp ring of a match-lock. Bate sprang from his mattress, forgetting his contempt for tricks. The verandah was all astir with women, hurrying to and fro with low wails and whispers. Through holes in the roof the moonlight streamed, whitening here a mosquito-net, there throwing one into ghastly shade; it gleamed on bare shoulders moving rapidly, and struck into sudden, frosty sparks the brazen ornaments that tinkled as the slaves hurried across the moonbeams and the shadow. No noise they made save that low whisper, and a rustle of their feet upon the mats. Even these sounds stilled as the rajah came out, his daughter with him, and hurriedly moved across. Bate and two or three Malays followed him to the outside verandah. They threw themselves down, and crept beneath the overhanging eave. Looking on the whole affair as melodramatic art, Bate gave it admiration unwilling but complete.

For the mounting was superb. On this side, the house looked out above the clearing towards the forest. So bright and still was the air, that every petal of each flower on the shrubs was clearly outlined. Dim and misty ran the belt of trees beyond, their tops silvered by the moonlight, but their roots hid in grey fog. Half up the vales hung swathes of vapour, twined amongst the shining branches. A thousand dim, faint sounds arose, joining to make a stilly murmur; but the retainers lying in that watery shadow gave no sign of life. The rajah talked with his men in whispers, and presently they all crept back, and vanished.

Bate also returned to bed, but he could not sleep. In vain he jeered at all this nonsense, and made epigrams and laughed at them. The mystery and romance of his position worked their spell. Some hours after, whilst he lay in a troubled doze, a soft voice called him. He sprang up at once. The room was pitchy dark, and no beam entered through the unglazed window overhead. "Take gun and pistol," whispered the voice in clear English; but it belonged not to the interpreter. Bate found his arms in the dark. Then a little hand seized his, and led him silently out, along a passage unknown to Bate's explorations. Reaching the outer door a chill wind struck him. All round and below was blackness; the moon had set; clouds held the sky and fog the earth. Following his guide, Bate climbed down the ladder. She took his hand again, and led him across the clearing, slowly, but without a moment's hesitation. Then a gentle rush of water sounded in his ears, and presently the girl whispered, "Stop! I find boat." It was found—a slender dugout—and Bate got in at his guide's direction. She pushed off, and then a swirl of the canoe, a gentle splash and tinkling of the water, told that the girl also was embarked. They slipped into the mist that crept and slowly twined above the river. "This is a dream!" said Bate to himself.

Silently and steadily they dropped down the stream—a soft ripple only betraying their passage. Bate himself could not hear the paddle-stroke against the side of the canoe, so carefully was it muffled. He said nothing, nor did the girl. They glided down like souls afloat on Acheron—so Bate declares.

As they went on, the mists grew thicker, but the girl was never at a loss. It turned bitterly cold as dawn drew near. The noises of the forest ceased, and the sudden splash of unseen beast or fish. Bate began to note dark smears of shadow in mid-air—the tops of trees whose base was lost in fog. Then the smear became continuous, and a blurred cloud showed on either hand, creeping always downward, as the wreathes of water-fog grew thinner. Suddenly, after two hours' journeying, a chill blast swept the stream, lifting the vapours, rolling them up, and scattering them. It roused Bate from a sleepy trance. All the brown river came into sight, hurrying on its track between two walls of foliage. And it showed him his guide.

Bate tells me that his feelings at this moment lie quite beyond my description. I am inclined to think him in the right. Sufficient to say that the rajah's daughter, whom he had seen hitherto in silk and cloth of gold, now wore the simple costume of a Dyak girl—thick petticoat of woven stuff, cuirass of brazen wire, and armlets of the same from elbow to knuckle. Her shoulders and bosom were uncovered, and no gemmed sandals hid the perfect symmetry of her feet. Somewhat confused she seemed under Bate's gaze, but a visible anxiety distracted her attention. "We go too slow!" muttered the rajah's daughter; "daylight here!" and then, throwing off the mufflers from her paddle, she hurried on with greater speed.

Presently they reached an old dead tapong tree, fallen half across the stream. The floods of years had lodged against its upper side a bank of sticks, and earth, and rubbish, on which the nipa palm sprang thickly. Cleverly the girl took her canoe round and under the tree, amongst plaited twigs and rotten branches, through which it passed with difficulty, though Bate assisted to break them down. Slowly they worked inshore, beneath the monstrous trunk. "I not been here since that high!" whispered the girl, smiling and motioning with her hand. "Let see!" She stood up, leaning on her paddle, and looked round. Beams of the rising sun flecked her round limbs and bosom as with gold.

Another foot or two they advanced; it grew dark beneath that shadowy arch.

"Now!" she said. "See that stick? Take and lift up!"

Bate saw a peg driven in the trunk above, as high as one could reach. He dutifully stretched out his hand, and raised himself. The peg was slimy with dew and wet; but it held firm. Raising himself to that level, he saw another peg within reach, and another. Thus mounting, he gained a foothold on the trunk, and found himself hidden in a little grove of ferns. Simultaneously did he discover that the most enterprising and ferocious inhabitants of the country had made this one of their strongholds. Ants attacked him savagely, so that he could scarce find time to grasp his rifle, which the girl handed up; then she herself gained a place beside him, and they walked along the tree.

Reaching firm ground they went on and on in the forest. The sun mounted higher in the sky, and grew hotter. No landmarks showed perceptible to European eyes; but the rajah's daughter made no pause. Now and again she muttered, "These trees grow big!" but she didn't stop. After walking an hour or two straight across the forest, Bate began to get weary. So did the girl, as well she might; but her courage did not fail, though the perspiration poured down her smooth neck and pretty shoulders. She only smiled at Bate's inquiries, and said, gently, "We soon get home—very soon!" He was lost in admiration of her courage, and a sort of patriotic thrill passed over him when, on his asking if she had no fear, the quiet answer came, "You orang Inggris! Tid' ada takut!"—"I am not afraid with you!" She told him how her father had sent her to learn English at Pontianak, and only laughed with glee when he reproached her for deceiving him so long about her knowledge of the language. "Iya!" she laughed. "Mana ada takut!"—"About that I was shy!" I am told to mention that the rajah's daughter had one of the sweetest smiles that human lips ever framed.

They came to a lofty cliff, rising sheer above the jungle, so straight that a man might hit it with his head, amongst that dense vegetation, before perceiving the obstacle. She worked along it a few yards, then entered a huge cavern, such as are frequent over all Borneo. Under the low roof twilight reigned, which soon deepened into midnight blackness as they passed through a narrow opening. From the box of bamboo slung at her waist the girl produced a taper, a bit of broken crockery, and touchwood fungus. Striking the bamboo with her chip of earthenware, she soon got a light, much to the astonishment of Bate, who had not learnt the many strange tricks by which these people at one and the same time make fire for themselves, and bewilderment for European savants.

Her taper lit, the girl went on through gallery after gallery, sometimes in twilight, sometimes in dark. Now and again she paused, and in a narrow part of the cavern stooped to arrange something under foot. After such stoppages she allowed Bate to precede her, whilst she refixed the sort of trap behind them, the feeble light just outlining her perfect figure. After half a dozen pauses of the sort, they reached the darkest, dampest part of the grotto. "No one been here!" she muttered, and gave him the taper. There were two or three crevices in the rock. The rajah's daughter raked them well out with her knife—for fear of scorpions, she whispered; then began to climb like a kitten with hands and toes. Bate held the light up, but she vanished in the obscurity above. He only heard her laboured breath, and saw the slender outline of her limbs. In a few seconds something rattled down at his feet—something that gleamed and shone as never yet did diamond of the Cape. He picked it up, wildly excited, but with no astonishment, for his doubts had vanished long ago. He knocked the earth from it, and he saw the king of all gems extant in the world.

A perfect octohedron it must have been, half as large as one's fist, and weighing probably a thousand carats. No attempt had been made to cut it, but the angles were smoothed down, and the whole surface polished. Bate estimates the stone, after this loss, at nine hundred and fifty carats, flawless, of the purest water, and worth, intrinsically, about one million sterling. Whilst he gazed, in a bewilderment of professional delight, the girl slipped down from above, and put her hand upon his shoulder with exclamations of rapturous astonishment. "I never saw it before," she murmured, her eyes shining brighter than the diamond. "I only knew where it was!"

"And what is to prevent my running away with it and you?" asked Bate, hysterically.

"Oh," she laughed, "you Inggris man! And you would be struck through and through with iron spears before you reached the air. Now, what you give for it?"

The formula brought Bate to reason. He examined and weighed the stone, making even a little sketch of it, and then unwillingly gave it back. "I'll give your father all he asks, but I must have time. It is a large sum."

"Of course," she said, "we daren't take away the diamond now. Perhaps the Dyaks attack my father at this moment." Gravely she sent him a few yards off into the darkness, and climbed the rock again and disappeared with the stone. Then they threaded the cavern once more, stopping at each place as before, and resetting the arrangements with extra care. Bate asked what they were, and she answered: "Dyak deer-traps. The spear strike you through the stomach. They all of Inggris steel and never rust, you see! Inggris steel and Inggris men true and stout. Holland men false and murderers!"

On the threshold of the cave the girl stopped suddenly, raising her hand. Faint and dull through the wood came a sound of musketry. "They fight there, they kill my father!" she cried, wringing her hands. And she ran off through the sunny forest with such practised speed that Bate had pain to follow her. A dozen times he fell headlong, but she slipped through every obstruction. Breathless, covered with ants and leeches, he reached the tapong tree in half the time it had taken them to walk the distance an hour before. At every enforced pause he heard that same dull sound of musketry, now slackening, now swelling to a roar. The girl had taken her place in her canoe long before he even reached the tree, and she beat her paddle with impatience, calling him. Bate lumbered in, almost upsetting the tiny craft. With feverish force she paddled out and up the stream. Her wild course through the jungle had disarranged the scanty Dyak dress, but the rajah's daughter heeded not such trifles in this dreadful danger. Her loose hair fell to her very feet, twisting in the golden fringe of an under garment, hidden previously by the petticoat. She paddled with frenzy, muttering to herself a sort of chant, which Bate conceived to be the war-song of her people. Full of anger and pity for the good old rajah thus persecuted, he longed to join in his defence. But in these canoes a European is helpless. Bate could do nothing to forward their approach. And the fire grew slack, then ceased. The girl stopped the paddling a moment to listen. No sound came to them save the murmuring of the river, and the dull buzz of tree-crickets from the bank. "Malay man all dead," she muttered. "Father taken! Look! I must swim. They not hurt Inggris man. I save myself; what can I do with you? I put you on bank at path here—walk up! Holland man take care of you and send you to Kuching. Me they ill-use and kill perhaps. Will you go?"

"I'll go," said Bate, though the poor fellow was sure he went to certain death, "if you can save yourself. But your father?"

"He is safe. They not hurt the rajah; for he got diamond," she added, with a bitter laugh. "And he too well known in Sambas and Pontianak. Here is the path! Come back to Sarawak in twelve months, and we send the diamond to you. Good-bye, orang Inggris!"

They had come abreast of a path opening on the river. With two strokes of the paddle she pushed the canoe into shallow water, and Bate jumped over. "Good-bye!" she cried again, and swept the head of her craft round. Bate, standing to his knees in water, caught the girl as she went past and kissed her. She scarcely seemed to notice; kissing, indeed, is a practice unknown to orientals. Righting the boat again with a lithe movement of her body, she gained mid-stream and hurried down. Bate watched her out of sight, then went up the path with rifle cocked and ready, determined to have a fight at least before he died.

No one he saw, nothing heard. But, half a mile from the river, he felt there were eyes watching him. The bush moved strangely, the voices of the jungle had a peculiar significance. His flesh crept. He stood and looked, but all was still and silent. Bate longed for something to happen. And presently, at a turn of the road, two Dyak chiefs stood before him. They had no arms, except the sheathed parang by their sides. Naked they were, but for chowats of silk and ornaments of gold innumerable. By these was Bate's suspicions roused, for he knew that Dyaks on the war-path superstitiously discard their golden trinkets. But the chiefs came forward graciously, with hands outstretched. "The English gentleman has lost his way," they said in Dutch, which Bate's Cape experience enabled him to understand. "Our young men will set him right." And, at a signal, the path was crammed with Dyaks, all armed with sumpitan and spear, who thronged round Bate with boisterous laughter. Before he could defend himself, a stalwart fellow stood within arm's length of his rifle-butt, ready to seize it on the first suspicious movement. The false Dyaks, who were evidently Malays of high position, looked on smilingly awhile; then said, still in Dutch, "The English gentleman wants to go home. We will show him the way!"

And so they did. At a place where the two roads met, Bate found his luggage all piled up. The Dyaks lifted it, and carried him back the way he had come. Before evening he found himself at the "house," where he had slept five days before. Just as on that occasion, Dyaks of the village relieved the former bearers, and his guides prepared to depart with much gaiety. Bate tried to learn from them something of the rajah's fate, but they only laughed. That the old man's dwelling had been stormed there was visible proof in the appearance of Bate's baggage. His Sarawak boy, however, did not turn up throughout their journey.

In due time his guides took Bate to the frontier, and passed him on. He slept at the same "houses," and found the same bearers at every stage. And so at length he reached the canoe lying caché on the Sarawak river, and got back to civilisation.

In Kuching the adventure made great noise, but Bate's story was so vague and so improbable that the Government could not interfere. He does not even know where the adventure took place. After waiting at the Sarawak capital for two months without any news, he came back to England. But my friend does not for an instant doubt that the rajah's daughter will keep her promise, and at the year's end he means to await her message in Kuching.

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

COUNT DE BONNEVAL.

It might be thought that between the years 1675 and 1747 Christendom afforded ample scope for adventurous spirits. There was enough, and perhaps more than enough, of fighting, fiddling, financiering, dancing, and duelling. There were wars and rumours of wars; treaties and alliances; schemes for the colonisation of Darien and Mississippi; Banks of England and Banks of France duly established—not without difficulty; there was the South Sea Bubble, and the regency of Philip of Orleans; the speculations of John Law; the struggle over the English, and the war over the Spanish, succession; there was buccaneering in the Western and piracy in the Eastern seas. All of these "institutions" might have been enjoyed in more or less Christian company, but the world which sailed under the Cross was not big enough for one remarkable man—a Frenchman of the French, if ever there were one. Claude Alexandre de Bonneval, the younger son of a noble family—one of the most ancient of the Limousin—sprang from childhood into youth, at that precise period when the young French nobles were beginning to get tired of Louis the Fourteenth, and the discipline introduced by his ministers. It is more than doubtful whether the French nobility ever cordially acquiesced in the régime of the great Louis. The cheery traditions of the League and the Fronde were yet fresh and green, and French gentlemen, smothered under the asceticism of the last days of a libertine king, sighed for the good old times when they fought freely, and fought "for their own hand." The loathing with which they regarded the reign of Madame de Maintenon is abundantly proved by the greedy haste with which they plunged into the dissipation of the regency. Young de Bonneval was an admirable representative of the race famous, or rather notorious, for producing the roués of the Temple. As a boy he received, at the hands of the Jesuits, a fair education for that period; that is to say, he acquired some knowledge of Latin and history, afterwards extended by his passion for reading; but his studies could not have been very far advanced at the age of eleven, when he entered the French navy, under the auspices of his relative, the illustrious Tourville. War having broken out in 1688, he figured in the naval battles of Dieppe, La Hogue, and Cadiz; but just as he was becoming a valuable naval officer, his peculiarity made itself apparent for the first time. In 1697 it occurred to the Count de Beaumont to treat Bonneval slightingly, on account of his youth. The result of this venture was three sword-wounds for Beaumont, and for Bonneval the necessity of leaving the navy. Hereupon he bought a commission in the regiment of Gardes Françaises, and, so far as can be ascertained, dwelt in peace with his brother officers until the War of Succession broke out in 1701, when he purchased, for thirty-three thousand livres—about two thousand pounds of our money—the command of a regiment of infantry, and marched into Italy, under the command of the Marshal de Catinat. In the opinion of Sainte-Beuve, the conduct of Bonneval is, throughout his life, consistent in its inconsistency. He always began well. His wit and bravery, his dash and good-humour, his brilliant conversation, and his thorough good-fellowship, made him successful and popular, until, in an evil hour, some indiscretion, some ill-advised joke, or some excessive tenacity on the point of honour, left him friendless and alone to repair his broken fortunes—a task, by-the-way, to which he proved thoroughly equal on every occasion. Employed in Italy by turns under Catinat, Villeroy, and Vendôme, he became the especial favourite of the latter, whose good and bad qualities he shared to a singular degree. He was evidently not over-particular as to what he said or what he did, so long as it was in good company. The gloomy Saint-Simon judged him severely: "A younger son of good family, with great talent for war, and plenty of wit, adorned by copious reading, of good address, eloquent, stylish, and graceful—a scamp, a spendthrift, a debauchee, and a plunderer." In the midst of success and popularity came a difficulty like poor Theodore Hook's—"an affection of the chest." There was something wrong in his accounts, in consequence of a difference of opinion respecting the capitulation of Ivrea, between him and the commissary-general of the army. Vendôme, who had approved his conduct in the matter, backed out when it came to the pinch, as boon companions generally do, and, instead of taking the affair in his own hands, recommended him to write to the Secretary of State for War—Chamillart—one of the bourgeois ministers of Louis, upon whom the example of Louvois, in snubbing the military, had not been lost. Bonneval wrote a letter explaining the irregularity — concerning some three thousand livres — at length, but took it into his head to conclude with the following remarkable paragraph: "I was not aware that an expense incurred with the consent and approbation of Monseigneur the Duc de Vendôme was subject to the revision of a pack of clerks, and rather than submit to it I would pay the money myself." Bonneval forgot the régime under which he was living. He imagined himself still in the full enjoyment of the rights exercised by his ancestors, under the League and the Fronde. He forgot that Louvois had already ruled the War Department, and that exalted rank and daring bravery were no longer excuses for disobedience and inaccuracy. Brought up in the school of Vendôme, he was slow in accepting the new doctrine of discipline, and marred his career by his inability to read the signs of the times.

Chamillart, stung by the scornful reference to men of the pen, and "having a true bourgeois feeling for honesty," replied in a style which is the best possible proof that the feudal nobles had had their day: "Sir,—I have received the letter you took the trouble to write me on the subject of the Biella accounts. If the sum in question had been truly employed, you would not offer to reimburse it at your own cost; and as you are not a sufficiently great lord to make presents to the king, it seems to me that you wish to avoid reckoning with clerks, because they know too well how to reckon." As the Prince de Ligne remarks, "This was more than was wanted to make an impetuous man like Bonneval spring off the hinges." Without a moment's reflection, he sat down and wrote the following fatal epistle: "Sir,—I have received the letter you took the trouble to write me, in which you inform me that I fear clerks because they know too well how to reckon. It is my duty to inform you that the great nobles of the kingdom sacrifice willingly their lives and their property in the king's service, but that we owe him nothing so far as our honour is concerned. Thus, if within three months I do not receive reasonable satisfaction for the affront you have put upon me, I shall enter the service of the emperor, wherein all the ministers are people of quality, and know how to treat their equals." This letter, threatening nothing short of desertion to the enemy, was no sooner gone than Bonneval, fearing arrest, asked the Duc de Vendôme for leave, and travelled in Italy for several months in 1705-6. He remained for some time at Venice, in the hope that some loophole would be made for him to return to his duty, but was bitterly disappointed at finding no pretext for repentance. At last poverty and mortification induced him to put his threat into execution. He went over to the enemy, then commanded by Prince Eugène in March, 1706—shortly after the desertion of the French flag by the Marquis de Langallerie, who, being a French lieutenant-general, passed with the same grade into the service of the emperor. This Langallerie is the same who became so well known by his project of reuniting the scattered fragments of the Jewish people into a nation—a curious specimen of a premier baron of Saintonge, successively a soldier of France, the Empire, Poland, Hesse-Cassel, and, it is said, of

Turkey, by turns a Catholic and a fervent Lutheran—and who was arrested on the brink of a great enterprise, whether to take the Jews back to Jerusalem or to help the Grand Turk to capture Italy is not clearly known. Whatever the project may have been, it was crushed by the emperor, who had Langallerie arrested and immured in the castle of Raab, where he soon died of grief and a fever. The Prince de Ligne makes light of the crime of desertion in the days of Bonneval, and points out that not long before Condé and Turenne had done the same thing; but Saint-Simon speaks of it with truly modern horror. Prince Eugène, however, welcomed the deserter warmly, employed him in several campaigns, and at once obtained for him the rank of major-general. In this capacity he served in the attack on the lines of Turin, and made a brilliant success, the French army being routed and forced to repass the Alps. In the battle the Marquis de Bonneval, the elder brother of the count, was taken prisoner, and would have been sabred at once by the Hungarian "heyducks" who had taken him, had not Bonneval arrived just in time to save him. Serving brilliantly at Tortona and elsewhere, Bonneval was high in favour at the conclusion of the war by the treaty of Utrecht. Pending the negotiations he contrived to distinguish himself in another way. He dispelled the dulness of existence by insisting to Lord Stafford that Louis the Fourteenth aspired to universal monarchy, and by fighting a Frenchman who felt aggrieved at that statement, and a Prussian who repeated it, coupled with improper expressions regarding the great king. Rash and inconsiderate as he was, Bonneval seems yet to have retained the favour of his chiefs, as, on the accession of Charles the Sixth to the empire, he obtained the grade of lieutenant-general, and one of the most ancient regiments in the Imperial army; and two years later became a member of the Aulic Council of War at Vienna. War now broke out between Austria and Turkey, the latter power having attacked the Morea, ceded to the republic of Venice by the treaty of Carlowitz. The Venetians called upon the emperor to carry out the terms of the alliance between the two powers, and, after a few fruitless attempts to preserve peace, Charles declared war against the Sublime Porte. It was in this war that Prince Eugène acquired his brightest renown. Under his command Bonneval distinguished himself at the battle of Peterwaradein by his desperate bravery, and received a wound which compelled him to wear an iron bandage for the rest of his life. His renown reached France, no longer the France of Louis the Fourteenth The old king was dead, and the regent Orleans ruled in his stead. Nothing was so much à la mode as to undo anything done during the late gloomy times, and therefore, as Bonneval had been disgraced by the old priest-ridden king, nothing could be in better taste than to welcome the prodigal back to a country where all were prodigals for a while. The regent made no difficulty about according letters of remission to Bonneval, who, having obtained leave from the emperor, reappeared in Paris, not as a pardoned deserter, but as a hero, whom everyone but the grim Saint-Simon was delighted to honour. The formal confirmation of his letters of pardon by the parliament of Paris was rather a triumph than a penance, as, instead of being, like other criminals, seated on the stool of repentance, he was accorded by the First President, on account of his wound, a velvet cushion. Tall, handsome, with a gay and martial air, with hair cut in a fashion of his own—odd enough then, but closely resembling the style of to-day—Bonneval had grace, style, and an excessively free and outspoken manner; in fact, he was a perfect cavalier, well fitted by nature and art to become the fashion at Paris in the year 1717. He became the fashion accordingly, and the happy instant—as it seemed to them—was seized upon by his family to marry him. He was forty-two years old, and at the height of his reputation. "Why should he not marry?" said his mother, the excellent dowager Marchioness de Bonneval, and it speaks well for De Bonneval, and for the filial instinct of Frenchmen generally, that his ungovernable soul bent at his mother's wish. Personally he abhorred wedlock, and told his brother and his sister-in-law, "My mother is mad to make me take a wife; if she persists, I will not promise not to save all leave-taking by starting for Germany the day after the wedding." But the marchioness was obstinate, and as persistent as old ladies are apt to be when they happen to be mothers and Frenchwomen. She had not only made up her mind that her son should marry, but had decided upon the young lady. Mademoiselle Judith de Biron was one of the twenty-six children of the Marquis de Biron, then grand equerry, and afterwards duke, and peer, and marshal of France, who enjoyed the particular favour of the regent—and indeed must have needed it sorely, with such an extensive family to provide for. All was arranged for the marriage, when, at the last moment, the Marchioness de Bonneval showed herself to be truly the mother of her eccentric son by "bolting" from the Hôtel de Biron, and taking refuge with the Duc de Bethune, who had a terrible time of it, before he could bring the old lady back to a sense of duty and the Hôtel de Biron. The marriage turned out badly, as might have been expected. On the day after the ill-omened union, the Marchioness de Biron and her new son held a noteworthy conversation. The mother-in-law caught Bonneval looking gloomy and listless, and attacked him with various and sundry of the pleasantries proper, no doubt, to the occasion, and suitable to the taste of the time. The reply was disconcerting in the extreme. "The fact is," quoth Bonneval, seriously, "I am devilish sorry I got married." This was a nice speech to make to a mother-in-law, and shows the fearless nature of the man. "You should have said so yesterday," replied the old lady, drily, and the scene ended. Bonneval, however, if easy to catch, was hard to hold. Even the golden chains of wedlock were as green withes to this Gallo-Imperial-Tartar. No man was ever less married than he. Ten days after the ceremony he returned to Hungary, abandoning his wife, whom he never saw again. She was worthy of a better fate. In the odd society of two mad old marchionesses and a feather-headed soldier, stands out clear and bright against the dark background of regency manners and regency morals, the figure of this pure and affectionate woman—a widowed bride. She was emphatically what the French call a "beautiful soul." She was unfortunate enough to love her husband, and to be proud of him. Nothing can be more affecting than the perusal of her letters to that agreeable scapegrace, who, by-the-way, rarely answered them. In every line of these beautiful epistles appear her abiding love for Bonneval; her pride and sympathy in his, just then, glorious career; her tender solicitude and anxiety for his safety. During the campaign of 1717 she writes: "My anxiety increases every day, like your inexactitude, and I am as persistent in tormenting myself as you are in neglecting me. Although I have reason to believe that no misfortune has happened to you—as nobody has told me of anything of the kind—I cannot refrain from adding to my grief a thousand alarms, which throw me into a state you will not understand, since you can remain two months without giving me the least sign of life. From this I ought to conclude that the marks of my affection touch you but little; it is, however, of a nature to hope for a happier fate. Thus, being unable to change my heart, I must conform to your maxims, which are, perhaps, to love in silence." Addressing him at first as "My dear Master," she at length, discouraged by his neglect, and fearing to weary him by her tender letters, falls back upon their relationship, and calls him "My dear Cousin," as if a nearer and dearer name were forbidden her. After a year of separation she writes: "I cannot wish you the power of knowing what your absence makes me suffer; and if I could show you what passes in my heart, I would not do so, for fear that pity would excite a tenderness which I desire for myself alone. I must confess that the heart which outlives indifference is sorely tried. I bear the burden, but yet I cannot complain. My own tenderness for you compensates me in some degree for the condition in which I exist, and which would be insupportable if I were not sustained by the remembrance of my past happiness—the cause of my present misery. No, I will not complain, for although I am utterly and frightfully wretched, I cannot regret the tranquillity of my former life. I care for nothing on earth but your love. . . . . "I fear always that glory is a redoubtable rival to me. However, it seems to me that we ought to balance your heart, and that when glory calls upon you to expose your life, I ought to make you take all permissible precautions for its preservation. Reflect upon this, my dear master, that my sole ambition is to preserve you, as you alone can make me happy. To-day I can only talk to you of myself, for I think only of you, and all else becomes insupportable. I kiss you with all my heart, and would buy with the half of my life the happiness of this letter." The effect of these charming letters upon Bonneval was a profound esteem for his wife—of whom he always spoke in the highest terms—an indisposition to answer her, and a resolution to keep at a distance. The rather one-sided correspondence continued till he took the turban, when his wife all at once left off writing; and it is curiously characteristic of him that he then complained bitterly of her neglect, and wanted to know what he had done that she should leave off writing to him. On Madame de Bonneval being informed of this, she wrote him one more letter, which is unfortunately lost. While this pure and gentle woman was wearing out her heart of gold, in vain regrets for the dashing soldier who loved and rode away, that hero was rapidly ascending the ladder of fame. Promoted on his arrival at Vienna to the grade of general of infantry, he set off at once to serve in the army of Prince Eugène, who opened the campaign with the siege of Belgrade, celebrated in story and in song. Bonneval exhibited wondrous valour, and military talent of that instantaneous kind which resembles inspiration. He was again wounded, but the town was taken and the Porte sued for peace, which was concluded in 1718 at Passarowitz. Shortly afterwards he took Messina, and when tranquillity reigned in Europe it seemed that he had nothing more left to do, except to enjoy his brilliant position, to wait for the command of the imperial armies—which could hardly fail to be his one day—and, perhaps one may think, to send for his wife. None of these ideas occurred to Bonneval, who, at the age of forty-four, appears to have been that supremely ridiculous personage—a middle-aged young man, encouraging around him a knot of wild dogs, who made Vienna unsafe for peaceable citizens after dark. German fun has never seemed very funny to other nations, and at the period in question it took the form of upsetting sedan-chairs, cutting the cables of the vessels moored in the Danube, and other horse-play equally humorous. Bonneval, whose general habits fitted him better for a camp than a city, fell in with the mad humour of these wags, and being of a frank, easy, and lovable nature, made many dangerous friends. He consorted with poets rather than with priests; went oftener to the cabaret than to mass; had songs written about him; and at last, such is the influence of evil communications, took to writing verses himself. This was his ruin. For a long while there had been a coolness between him and his old patron and commander, Prince Eugène. In fact, the prince, who had been a wild wassailer in his day, was growing old, and—bowed down by the weight of honours, was disposed to forget that he had once been conveyed to the guardhouse with the insignia of the Golden Fleece upon him. A species of gloomy fanaticism of the Spanish kind was in vogue at Vienna, against which the life led by Bonneval was an extravagant protest. The Frenchman now made a decided blunder. Being a member of the Aulic Council of War, of which Prince Eugène was president, he took it upon himself to remonstrate with him touching the influence which the Countess Batthyany exercised over him in disposing of patronage. Bonneval was naturally irritated at seeing the creatures of the countess promoted over the heads of gallant but scampish officers of his acquaintance, but the prince never forgave him. More than this, he told the countess, who determined that he should not forget. Enraged at further slights, Bonneval produced a copy of verses satirising the venal followers of the prince, to whom it was at once pointed out that to attack his creatures was only to attack himself indirectly. Bonneval's faithful wife heard of his danger, and wrote: "I have been much pained by the reports circulated here touching your quarrel with Prince Eugène . . . When our friends become our enemies they are, I think, most dangerous." Feminine instinct proved unerring. Bonneval was obliged to leave Vienna, and to take his regiment into garrison at Brussels, where we find him in 1724, rather gouty, but leading a joyous life at suppers and concerts, until he got into a fatal scrape with the governor, the Marquis de Prié. It is almost incredible, unless we take Bonneval's peculiar character into consideration, that a nobleman, a distinguished commander, and a man of the world, should, on the verge of his fiftieth birthday, have been absurd enough to get into serious trouble anent a silly piece of gossip about the young Queen of Spain. The Marchioness de Prié and her daughter had been talking scandal about this little Queen Elizabeth, the daughter of the late regent Orleans, when Bonneval (who hated the governor as a creature of Prince Eugène) suddenly discovered that he was allied to the royal family of France through the houses of Foix and Albret; that the Queen of Spain was, therefore, a kind of cousin of his; and that he was bound to espouse her quarrel. Hereupon he defied De Prié, whose sole answer was to send him under a guard of fifty dragoons to Antwerp, and to lock him up in the citadel. Hence he wrote to everybody and appealed to everybody; declared the question of discipline insignificant; and once more delivered himself of that creed of persons of quality with which he had whilome favoured Chamillart—"Persons of my birth have three masters: God, their honour, and their sovereign. We owe to the last no service which could offend the two first." In other words, this is an appeal to what is called, even to this day, a "higher law," and means, in plain language, that the writer intends to do exactly what pleases himself. To improve matters, he sent a species of cartel to Prince Eugène, and after intriguing for awhile at the Hague, whither he betook himself after leaving the citadel of Antwerp, he went on to Vienna, to meet the charges against him. Here he was arrested again, and being brought before the Council of War at the instance of Prince Eugène, was imprisoned for a year in a fortified town, after which he went to Venice, the fatal theatre of his first desertion.

There can be hardly two opinions as to the treatment experienced by Bonneval at the hands of the emperor. A distinguished general officer, the hero of many daring exploits, he found himself, in his declining years, exiled and disgraced for a crime which injured nobody. His letters to the Marquis de Prié and to Prince Eugène were offensive beyond doubt, but the crime of constructive insubordination could barely justify the Empire in casting off a faithful servant—so poor in circumstances that, after a short stay in Venice, he had scarcely the means of subsistence.

At the end of his resources, without cash, credit, or any character (except for courage) to speak of, our elderly viveur found himself absolutely under the necessity of again taking service under some flag or other. Commencing to intrigue with Spain, he received friendly notice from the Imperial ambassador — at a masquerade, of all places in the world —to be careful what he wrote and said, as it would be easy for the emperor to have him kidnapped from a town like Venice; and moreover, that if he could only keep himself quiet, his quarrel with Prince Eugène could be easily made up, and his return to Vienna assured. It was the misfortune of Bonneval, who ordinarily exhibited an open trustful nature, to doubt the sincerity of this intimation. He, generally so brave, saw only a threat, and cast about for a place of safety. Switzerland was hardly safe, nor Holland either; he was not rich enough to live in London, according to his rank; and at last pitched upon Constantinople as the safest refuge. At Bosnia Serai, a frontier fortress belonging to the Turks, he was recognised by a major in the Austrian service, who had come over from Essek on some business connected with his regiment. This major lost no time in denouncing him to the commandant of the place, and protested formally against his being allowed to enter Turkey or the Turkish service. Bonneval was at once put under arrest, but treated otherwise civilly enough, by the pacha in command, who, however, persisted in detaining him, the thrashings that he had helped Prince Eugène to give the Turks having made them unusually subservient to the wishes of the Imperial Court. At last Austria formally demanded, through its ambassador at Constantinople, the extradition of Bonneval, and laid schemes for carrying him off from Bosnia Serai, "dead or alive." After fourteen months of detention on the frontier, where he endeared himself to the Corps of Janissaries, Bonneval received the fatal news that the Porte had decided upon his extradition. This meant—at least Bonneval thought so—death, or, worse still, a life in prison, and determined him to play his last card. He took the turban, to the delight of the pacha, who embraced him "with effusion." Two days later arrived the formal order of extradition, which it was then impossible to obey. Bonneval was a Turk, duly proclaimed and recognised, was backed by several thousand janissaries, and, as a convert, could not be given up to his enemies. Probably the Turks were very glad to get so excellent a soldier on such easy terms, and Bonneval does not appear to have regretted a decision which, in his own opinion, was forced upon him by the virulence of the Viennese, and the apathy of the French ambassador. Elevated to the rank of pacha, he lived as a Turk for seventeen years in great honour and consideration. He said, indeed, that it was only in Turkey that he received Christian treatment. Oddly consoling himself with the reflection that he was now as good a Turk as ever he had been a Christian, he accommodated himself well enough to his new mode of life, but there are yet indications that, from time to time, he felt strange yearnings for civilised life. His contempt for the Turks, who were deaf to his projects for remodelling their army, was immense. At last his good-humoured toleration of them turned to disgust, and he opened negotiations with his brother the marquis to make his peace with Rome, and assist his escape from Islam. These plans were cut short by his death—of gout—on the 23rd March, 1747, the anniversary of the birth of Mohammed, as is set forth in the epitaph of Achmet Pacha, sometime Count de Bonneval.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLIV.

It was no more possible to do anything unusual in Whitford without arresting attention, and being subjected to animadversion, than it was possible for atmospheric conditions to change without affecting the barometer.

Who could tell how it got abroad in the town, that young Mrs. Errington was in the habit of following her husband about; of watching him, spying on his actions, and examining his private correspondence? Mr. Obadiah Gibbs, who could have told more than anyone on the latter head, was not given to talking. Yet the fact oozed out.

It assumed, of course, a great variety of forms and colours, according to the more or less distorting mediums through which it passed. The fact, as uttered by Miss Chubb, for example, was a very different-looking fact from that which was narrated with bated breath, and nods, and winks, by Mrs. Smith, the surgeon's wife. And her version, again, varied considerably from those of Mr. Gladwish, the Methodist shoemaker; Mr. Barker, the Church of England chemist; and the bosom friends of the servants at Ivy Lodge. Still, under one shape and another, Mrs. Algernon Errington's jealousy of her husband, and her consequent behaviour, were within the cognisance of Whitford, and were discussed in all circles there.

The predominant feeling ran strongly against Castalia. There were persons, indeed, who, exercising an exemplary impartiality (on which they much prided themselves), refused to take sides in the matter, but considered it most probable that both parties were to blame. Mrs. Smith was among these. She had, she declared, that rare gift in woman—a judicial mind, although her conception of the judicial functions appeared to be limited to putting on the black cap, and passing sentence. But in the main, public sympathy was with Algernon. He had offended many old acquaintances by his aristocratic marriage; but at least he was now making the only amends in his power by being extremely unhappy in it! A great many wiseacres, male and female, were now able to shake their heads, and say they had known all along how it would turn out. This came of flying too high; for, if Mrs. Errington, senior, was an Ancram by birth, her husband had been only a country surgeon—not even M.D., though she called him "doctor." And this justifying of their predictions was, in a vague way, imputed to Algernon as a merit; or, at the least, it softened disapproval. Then, too, in justice to Whitfordians, it must be said that all their knowledge of Castalia showed them an insolent, supercilious, uninteresting woman, who made no secret of her contempt for them and their town, and who, "although but a poor postmaster's wife, when you came to look at it," as Mrs. Smith the judicial truly observed, gave herself more airs than a duchess. What good, or capacities for good, there might be in her, was hidden from Whitford, whilst her unpleasant qualities were abundantly manifested to all beholders.

Poor Castalia, in her quite unaffected nonchalance and disregard of "all those people," was totally ignorant how much resentment and dislike she was creating, and in what a hostile atmosphere she was living. Her husband's popularity, dimmed by his alliance with her, began to revive, when it was perceived that she persecuted and harassed him, and (as was shrewdly suspected) involved him in money difficulties by her extravagance. Some of the men thought it served him right; why did he marry such a woman? But the ladies, as a rule, were on Algernon's side.

There were exceptions, of course. Miss McDougall stood up for her friend, as she said, albeit with some admixture of Mrs. Smith's judicial tendency to blame everybody all round, and a personal disposition towards spitefulness. Minnie Bodkin said very little, when the subject was mentioned in her presence; but when an opinion was forced from her, she did not deliver it entirely in favour of Algernon. She was sorry for his wife, she said. And nine-tenths of her hearers would retort with raised hands and eyes, that they, for their part, were sorry for the young man, and that they could not understand what dear Minnie found to pity in Mrs. Algernon Errington. "A woman who spies on her husband, my dear! Who condescends to open his letters—how a woman can so degrade herself, is a mystery to me! And they say she actually follows him about the streets at night—skulks after him! Oh! it is almost too bad to repeat!"

"I don't know that all that is true. But if it be so, it seems to me that there is great cause for pity," Minnie would reply. And the answer was set down to poor dear Miss Bodkin's eccentricity.

There had been, for some time back, a talk of carelessness and mismanagement at the Whitford Post-office. Then Roger Heath made no secret of his loss, and was not soft-hearted or mild in his manner of speaking of it. He complained aloud, and spared nobody. And there were plenty of voices ready to carry his denunciations through all classes of Whitford society. It was very strange! Such a thing as the loss of a money-letter had been almost unknown, during the reign of the late postmaster; and now there was, not one case, but two—three—a dozen! The number increased, as it passed from mouth to mouth, at a wonderful rate. There must be great negligence (to say the least of it) somewhere in the Whitford Post-office. If the present postmaster was too much above his business to look after it properly, it was a pity his high friends didn't remove him to some situation better suited to such a fine gentleman!

To be sure he was worried out of his wits by that woman. It really was true that she haunted the office at all hours. She had been seen slipping out of the private door in the entry. She was even said to have a pass-key, which enabled her to go in and out at her will. Was it not rumoured on very good authority that she had actually gone to the office alone, in the dead of night? What could she want to be always prowling about there for? It was all very well to say she went to spy on her husband, but if things went wrong in the office in consequence of her spyings, it became a public evil. Anyway, it was most extraordinary and unheard-of behaviour, and somebody ought to take the matter up! This latter somewhat vague suggestion was a favourite climax to the gossip on the subject of the Algernon Erringtons.

With respect to their private affairs, things did not mend. Tradesmen dunned, and grumbled, and could not get their money, and some declined to execute further orders from Ivy Lodge until their accounts were settled. Among the angriest had been Mr. Ravell, the principal draper of the town, whom Castalia had honoured with a good deal of her custom. But one day, not long after Algernon's conversation with his clerk mentioned in the last chapter, he was met in the High-street by Mr. Ravell, who bowed very deferentially, and stopped, hesitatingly. "Could I say a word to you, sir?" said Mr. Ravell.

"Certainly," replied Algernon. They were close to the post-office, and he took the draper into his private room, and bade him be seated.

"I suppose, Mr. Ravell," said Algernon, with a shrug and a smile, "that you have come about your bill! Mrs. Errington mentioned to me a short time ago that you had been rather importunate. Upon my word, Mr. Ravell, I think you need not have been in such a deuce of a hurry! I know Mrs. Errington does not understand making bargains, and I suppose you don't neglect to arrange your prices so as not to lose by giving her a little credit, eh?"

This was said lightly, but either the words or the tone made Mr. Ravell colour and look a little confused. He was seated, and Algernon was standing near him with his back to the fire, expressing a sense of his own superiority to the draper, in every turn of his well-built figure, and every line of his half-smiling, half-bored countenance.

"Why, you see, Mr. Errington, we are not in the habit of giving long credit, unless to a few old-established customers who deal largely with us. It would not suit our style of doing business. And it was reported that you were not settled permanently here. And—and—one or two unpleasant things had been said. But I hope you will not continue to feel so greatly offended with us for sending in the account. It was merely in the regular way of our transactions, I assure you."

"Oh, I'm not offended at all, Mr. Ravell! And I hope by the end of this month to clear off all scores between us entirely. Mrs. Errington has not furnished me with any details, but——"

Ravell looked up quickly. "Clear off all scores between us, sir?" he said.

"I presume you will have no objection to that, Mr. Ravell?"

"Oh, of course, sir, you will have your joke! I am glad you are not offended. You see, ladies don't always understand these matters. Mrs. Errington was a little severe on us when she paid the account yesterday. At least so my cashier said."

"My wife paid your account yesterday?" cried Algernon, with a blank look.

"Yes, sir, in full. We should have been quite satisfied if settlement had been made up to the end of last quarter. But it was paid in full. Oh, I thought you had been aware of it! Mrs. Errington said—my people understood her to say, that it was by your wish, as you were so greatly annoyed at the bill being sent in so often."

"Oh! Yes. Quite right, Mr. Ravell."

He spoke slowly, and as if he were thinking of something other than the words he uttered. Ravell looked at him curiously. Algernon suddenly caught the man's eye, and broke into a little careless laugh. "The fact is," said he, with a frank toss of his head, "that I did not know Mrs. Errington had paid you. I suppose she had received some remittances, or—but in short," checking himself, and laughing once more, "I daresay you won't trouble yourself as to where the money comes from so long as it comes to you!"

Mr. Ravell laughed back again, but rather in a forced manner. "Not at all, sir! Not at all," he said, bowing and smiling. And, seeing Algernon look significantly at his watch, he bowed and smiled himself out of the office.

Then Mr. Ravell went away to report to his wife the details of his interview with the postmaster, and before noon the next day it was reported throughout Whitford that Mrs. Algernon Errington had the command of mysterious stores of money whereof her husband knew nothing; and that, nevertheless, she ran him into debt right and left, and refused to pay a farthing until she was absolutely forced to do so.

This report was not calculated to make those tradesmen who had not been paid more patient and forbearing. If Mrs. Algernon Errington could find money for one she could for another, they argued, and a shower of bills descended on Ivy Lodge within the next week or two. Algernon said they came like a swarm of locusts, and threatened to devour all before them. He acknowledged to himself that the payment of Ravell's bill had been a fatal precedent. "And, perhaps," he thought, "there was no need for getting rid of the notes after all! However, the thing is done, and can't be undone."

The necessity for another appeal to Lord Seely grew more and more imminent. Castalia had displayed an unexpected obstinacy about the matter. She had held to her refusal to ask for more money from her uncle, but Algernon had not yet urged her very strongly to do so. The moment had now come, he thought, when an appeal absolutely must be made, and he doubted not his own power to cause Castalia to make it. Her manner, to be sure, had been very singular of late; alternately sullen and excited, passing from cold silence to passionate tenderness, without any intermediate phases. He had surprised her occasionally crying convulsively, and at other times, on coming home, he had found her sitting absolutely unoccupied, with a blank, fixed face. The few persons who saw Castalia frequently, observed the change in her, and commented on it. Miss Chubb once dropped a word to Algernon, indicating a vague suspicion that his wife's intellect was disordered. He did not choose to appear to perceive the drift of her words, but the hint dwelt in his mind.

"You must write to Lord Seely this evening, Cassy," he said one day on returning home to dinner. He had found his wife at her desk, and, on seeing him, she had huddled away a confused heap of papers into a drawer, and hastily shut it.

"Must I?" she answered gloomily.

"Well, I don't wish to use an offensive phrase. You will write to oblige me. It has been put off long enough."

"Why should I oblige you?" said Castalia, looking up at him with her sunken eyes. She looked so ill and haggard, as to arrest Algernon's attention — not too lavishly bestowed on her in general.

"Cassy," said he, "I'm afraid you are not well!"

The tears came into her eyes. She turned her head away. "Do you really care whether I am ill or well?" she asked.

"Do I really care? What a question! Of course I care. Are you suffering?"

"N—no; not now. I believe I should not feel any suffering if you only loved me, Ancram."

"Castalia! How can you be so absurd?"

He rose from his seat beside her, and walked impatiently up and down the room. Nothing irritated him so much as to be called on for sentiment or tenderness.

"There!" she exclaimed, with a little despondent gesture of the head, "you were speaking and looking kindly, and I have driven you away! I wish I was dead."

Algernon stopped in his walk, and cast a singular look at his wife. Then after a moment he said, in his usual light manner, "My dear Cassy, you are low and nervous. It really is not good for you to mope by yourself as you do. Come, rouse yourself to write this letter to my lord, then, after dinner, you can have the fly to drive to my mother's. She complains that she sees you very seldom."

"Will you come too, Ancram?"

"I——well, yes; if it is possible, I will come too."

"I think," said Castalia, putting her hands on his shoulders and gazing wistfully into his face, "that if you and I could go away to some quiet strange place—far away from all these odious people—across the seas somewhere—I think we might be happy even now."

"Upon my honour, there's nothing I should like so much as to get away across the seas! And you might as well hint to my lord, in the course of your letter, that I should be very well contented with a berth in the Colonies. A good climate, of course! One wouldn't care to be shipped off to Sierra Leone!"

"I will write that to Uncle Val, willingly. But——don't ask me to beg money of him again."

Algernon made a rapid calculation in his mind, and answered without appreciable pause, "Well, Cassy, it shall be as you will. But as to begging——that, I think, is scarcely the word between us and Lord Seely."

"I'll run upstairs and bathe my eyes, and I shall still have time to write before dinner," said Castalia, and left the room.

When he was alone, Algernon opened the writing-table drawer, and glanced at the papers in it. Castalia's hurried manner of concealing them had suggested to his mind the suspicion, that she might have been writing secretly to her uncle. He found no letter addressed to Lord Seely, but he did find an unfinished fragment of writing addressed to himself. It consisted of a few incoherent phrases of despondency and reproach—the expression of confidence betrayed, and affection unrequited. There was a word or two in it about the writer's weariness of life, and desire to quit it. Castalia had written many such fragments of late; sometimes as a mere outlet for suppressed feeling, sometimes under the impression that she really could not long support an existence uncheered by sympathy or counsel, embittered by jealousy and chilled by neglect. She had written such fragments, and then torn them up in many a lonely hour, but she had never thought of complaining of Algernon to Lord Seely. She would complain of him to no human being. But all Algernon's insight into his wife's character did not enable him to feel sure of this. Indeed, he had often said to himself, that no rational being could be expected to follow the vagaries of Castalia's sickly fancies, and impracticable temper. He would not have been surprised to find her pouring out a long string of lamentations about her lot to Lord Seely. He was not much surprised at what he did find her to have written, although the state of feeling it displayed seemed to him as unreasonable and unaccountable as ever. He gave himself no account of the motive which made him take the fragment of writing, fold it, and place it carefully inside a little pocket-book which he carried.

"I wonder," he thought to himself, "if Castalia is likely to die!"

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXIX. FLIGHT.

It was somehow contrived that there should be no coroner's inquest, for the omission of which, indeed, there were many urgent reasons. Since Mr. Raeburn himself was an attorney, we may conclude that the law was not outraged in the matter; while it should be mentioned also that neither he nor his son (unless the instance I have mentioned could be called evasion) showed the least disposition to evade inquiry. They only stipulated, in case any such were necessary, that it should be held elsewhere than at the Priory—which the condition of the two invalids obviously demanded. Thanks to the judicious supervision of nurse Hopkins, Gertrude was not made aware of the calamity that had befallen the household, and was reported by Mr. Wilde to be progressing favourably. Whether brother Alec had been made acquainted with the matter or not, I was not informed; but the wail of his wakeful bird, with its "Dead, dead, dead! Only think of that!" discoursed nightly, through the partition-wall, of nothing else.

Mark Raeburn looked utterly broken by his bereavement; the far-back memory of the dead had, perhaps, something tender for him whereon to feed his thought; or, what is more likely, this strong prop being thus suddenly removed from his side, he was unable to bear up without it. He went about the house a piteous spectacle, or sat in his brother's room with John, or alone. Dr. Doldrum redeemed his promise and visited him repeatedly, but, notwithstanding that the resources of science were so "boundless," benefited him nothing. If the doctor feared that Mr. Wilde would have taken umbrage at his professional attentions, he was mistaken. When I told him how the former had volunteered his services to the attorney, and that they had been accepted, he only replied, "Thank Heaven," and seemed well content.

On the day before the funeral, which was arranged for as early a date as possible, Mr. Wilde came down to speak to me as usual after he had seen Gertrude.

She was greatly better, and it was in contemplation that she would soon be removed to Stanbrook, where my aunt had made every preparation to receive her. These tidings lifted the weight of depression that had so long hung about my spirits, and made them so buoyant that I almost reproached myself for feeling such gladness in so sad a house. But in Mr. Wilde's face there was no reflection of my satisfaction.

"It is good news, indeed, so far as Miss Floyd is concerned," said he, in explanation of his gravity; "but there is more trouble in store, I fear, for this unhappy family."

"Surely no one suspects——" said I.

"No, no," interrupted he; "the death of that wretched woman has absolved her from human laws; but something else is wrong under this roof. See here."

He produced from his pocket an official-looking letter. It was from Mr. Sinclair, the secretary of the Life Insurance Company in London, and set forth that, although Mr. Alexander Raeburn's quarterly payment had been made the previous week, there had been an informality in it, which he (Mr. Wilde) was requested to set right. The medical certificate of the invalid's inability to repair to London in person ought to have been forwarded, as in the first instance, notwithstanding that Mr. Sinclair was himself acquainted with the facts of the case. Under the distressing circumstance that had befallen the household, the secretary had written to Mr. Wilde direct, instead of advising Mr. Raeburn of the matter.

"Well, you had better see Mr. Alexander, and send the certificate, had you not?" said I. "There will be no difficulty in that, of course?"

"Perhaps not; but observe, Mr. Sinclair says, 'as in the first instance.' Now I have never sent any certificate to Mr. Sinclair at all. Consequently the one he did receive, if signed with my name, must have been a forgery."

This idea was overwhelming; everything had been so mysterious, in connection with brother Alec's illness, of late months that nothing seemed incredible; at the same time, the matter seemed capable of explanation.

"The first certificate," urged I, "may have been sent from the doctor at the seaside, just before Mr. Alexander returned from it."

"Then why should Mr. Sinclair write to me? I had no reason to suppose that he even knew of my existence."

"Mr. Raeburn, or John, may have mentioned you as the medical attendant of the family."

"It is just possible," answered the doctor, thoughtfully.

"At all events," said I, "nothing can be easier than to see one of them and get the matter explained at once."

"Not to-day," answered Mr. Wilde; "I will wait till after the funeral. In the meantime I will leave this note for Mr. Raeburn; you will make sure he gets it. He should have notice of the application at once, I think; and Mr. Sinclair must wait a post for my reply."

So, therefore, it was arranged. I gave the letter to John that afternoon with my own hands, and he took it up to his father.

In the evening John came down to keep me company for awhile. He looked ill and wretched, and said that he found his uncle's room intolerable to sit alone in.

"But your father is there, is he not?"

"No; I forgot to tell you, he has asked Mrs. Hopkins's permission to see Gertrude, and he is now with her."

"I hope not to tell her about your poor mother?" cried I, whom this news alarmed on Gerty's account.

At present she believed that Mrs. Raeburn was suffering from severe indisposition, and expressed her hope that she should soon be permitted to tend her. She was quite unaware, also, of the Stanbrook project, which was not to be revealed to her till the next afternoon.

"No, no," said John, with the same absent and abstracted air that I had noticed in him for the last few days; "he will be sure not to speak of that to Gertrude. He has other things to tell her."

I did not like that notion either, for the "other things" would probably be business matters, to which she was surely in no condition to listen; yet I was obliged to be content.

The topic was not resumed, nor did John speak upon any other, except in monosyllables, throughout the evening. The elastic nature of the poor young fellow seemed unable to assert itself under its load, whether of present grief or coming trouble. I was of course present at the funeral, which took place on the ensuing forenoon at the Kirkdale cemetery, which stands without the town, and near the railway station. It was very fully attended, out of regard for Mark of course, rather than for his dead wife, who, in truth, did not leave a single friend behind her. My uncle was one of those present, and my aunt, he told me, had accompanied him to Kirkdale in a roomy carriage, in which it had been arranged by Mr. Wilde that Gertrude should be taken to the Rectory that very day. If it was found necessary to tell her what had happened, she would more easily recover from the shock at Stanbrook, he thought, than at the Priory; but, as a matter of fact, they did not tell her till long afterwards. Aunt Eleanor had invented the fiction that Mrs. Raeburn's indisposition was infectious, though not dangerous, and thereby persuaded Gerty to leave the house, without an attempt to see her hostess. Her removal had been effected before I returned to the Priory. Mr. Raeburn and his son had departed from the cemetery in their mourning-coach as they had come, alone, and had not yet come back, when I arrived on foot by a shorter way. Anything more desolate and dismal than that death-stricken house it was impossible to picture; and when I saw Mr. Wilde come up the drive, I ran out to meet him with a cry of joy. He told me that Gertrude had been got into the carriage without difficulty or objection. She was the meekest of patients, he said, and would, no doubt, prove the best of wives. This allusion to my daily strengthening hopes was made, I have no doubt, to cheer me, and in mitigation of some other news of a different sort that he had brought with him.

"Mr. Raeburn and his son have gone off by train to London," said he, abruptly.

"Gone to London!" cried I. "Why, they never hinted a word of such intention. I have been expecting them home every moment for this half-hour."

"What I tell you is true, however," answered Mr. Wilde; "and it is my impression you will never see either of them again."

"Then poor Mr. Raeburn must have learnt the facts about his wife and Gertrude?" said I, calling to mind the attorney's interview with the latter the previous night.

"No, Sheddon, I think not. If I know Mrs. Raeburn's character, she was not one to make a confidant in anything, far less in a crime of her own compassing. She destroyed my letter, too, you may be sure, before she——died."

The pause had such significance in it that it could not escape my attention.

"Good heavens!" cried I, "do you mean that she destroyed herself?"

"I do not know, Sheddon; I do not wish to know," replied Mr. Wilde, gravely; "but such is my belief. When I sent nurse Hopkins with that letter indeed, I half suspected that the next thing I should hear of Mrs. Raeburn would be that she was dead; and hence it was that I warned you not to send for me in case she needed medical aid. If you had done so, I should have discovered the truth, and must have told it. Dr. Doldrum," added my companion grimly, "has fortunately a great opinion of 'the heart' as a cause of mortality."

"Then you really think that this wretched woman committed suicide?" said I, aghast.

"I do," answered Mr. Wilde, decisively; "and I think I can guess the means employed. So sudden a death is suggestive of a particular poison, and of that I happen to know (for I wrote out the authorisation for it to the chemist) she purchased some a few months back, to put an end to a savage dog, which she said was troubling the house."

"That was poor Mr. Alec's bull-dog, Fury," said I, "no doubt. It disappeared quite suddenly."

"Very likely. She did not, however, use it all, I think, for that purpose."

"But, suppose, getting impatient of her slower method," suggested I in horror, "she had given it to Gertrude!"

"She was too wise for that, Sheddon. She guessed that I had my suspicions about her, and that I should not have attributed a catastrophe such as hers, had it happened in Gertrude's case, to natural causes—— Well, you and I alone are the depositaries of that secret, and it must go no farther. There is another about to disclose itself within here, unless I am mistaken, which will have to be divulged to all the world."

We had been talking hitherto in the carriage drive, but my companion now led the way into the house.

"I am come here, you know, to see Mr. Mark Raeburn about that certificate of his brother's illness. Since he has gone away, I must needs apply to the patient himself. Will you come with me upstairs to Mr. Alexander?"

CHAPTER XXX. RUIN.

After the gloomy incident of the morning, and the terrible revelation I had just heard from my companion's lips, a mere visit to a sick man was not an ordeal from which I had any reason to shrink; and yet the thought of it oppressed me more than all the rest. I had not yet got over the shock of that silent interview with brother Alec, the circumstances of which, contrasted with my uncle's experience of his condition, were so inexplicable to me; and his apartments, perhaps from my long and mysterious exclusion from them, had a sort of Bluebeard's chamber "attraction of repulsion" for me, which I was ashamed to confess, even to myself. It was with a beating heart, therefore, that I followed Mr. Wilde upstairs, past the chamber from which, though she had left me so desolate, I felt thankful that my darling had been removed, and the door of which now stood open for the first time for months; past the room, too, from which its lifeless tenant had been borne that morning, and where my own eyes had made the search, the result of which had caused her to perish miserably by her own hand.

At the door of brother Alec's sitting-room Mr. Wilde made a moment's pause, then entered abruptly and without knocking, and I followed close upon his heels. It was, as I expected to find it, vacant; then he passed swiftly through into the other room, from which, as usual, the light was almost excluded by curtains and shutters. In the bed I could just discern the form of the sick man, with his face turned towards the darkened window. Mr. Wilde approached it, but it did not move.

"Mr. Raeburn, Mr. Raeburn!" cried I loudly, for the silence, as before, was getting intolerable to me. "Mr. Wilde has come to see you; will you not speak to him?"

There was a moment's pause, and then the monotonous cry that I knew so well broke forth at my elbow: "Dead, dead, dead! Only think of that!"

"The parrot is right," observed Mr. Wilde, calmly.

"Great Heaven!" cried I, in horror, "you don't mean to say that Mr. Alexander is lying there a corpse?"

"There is no Mr. Alexander here at all, Sheddon," answered my companion, and, at the same time, he threw open the shutters, and let a flood of light into the room. Then I saw that the thing I had taken for the invalid was but a bundle of clothes, cunningly disposed so as to represent a human form. Everything in the apartment was in accordance with its character of sick room: the phials on the mantelpiece, the watcher's chair by the bedside, spoke of ministrations and tendance; but of the man for whom these tokens of solicitude existed there was no trace.

"What on earth has become of him? Dead or alive, where is he hidden?" asked I, in amazement.

"I cannot answer that question, Sheddon," replied Mr. Wilde; "though that he is dead—and buried—I have no doubt. What you saw a week ago was this same Eidolon—this counterfeit presentment—which we see now, and in my opinion there has been nothing else here for months. Mr. Alexander Raeburn never returned from Sandibeach."

"But I have seen him, certainly once since then, for I conversed with him; and my uncle has had two interviews with him—one in Mr. Sinclair's presence, and the other alone, not a week ago!"

"You have all been deceived, Sheddon, though by what means I cannot guess. Mr. Alexander was never here; of that I am confident. The forged certificate; the seclusion in which his family shrouded him; and, above all, this pretence of his presence here, convince me of the fact. Some one has played his part on the few occasions when it was necessary, and played it successfully."

A sudden revelation, in the likeness of John Raeburn to his uncle, here broke in upon me.

"It must have been John Raeburn!" cried I. "I remember now that he was said to be away from home on both dates of my uncle's coming. It must have been he who lay in that bed, and fooled us all."

"And to some purpose, too," observed Mr. Wilde, grimly, "since he thereby obtained two payments of an annuity for a man who was dead and buried. He must have forged the medical certificate, too, in the first instance, which brought the secretary down from town, and if he had but known that a second was necessary, this game might have gone on for years. It is not an original idea, Sheddon. There was a bishop once, who, thanks to an intelligent housekeeper, received his episcopal revenues for several quarters after his demise; but it was a very clever contrivance, for all that."

The cynical tone of my companion jarred upon my feelings. The ingenuity of this nefarious scheme excited in me no admiration. I only thought of the shame of its discovery, which must not only overwhelm the perpetrators of the fraud, but affect others wholly innocent of it. I now perceived why my uncle Hastings had been fixed upon to certify to the fact of Alexander Raeburn's existence; the guilelessness of his nature, and the carelessness with which all business matters, whether of his own or others, was transacted by him, had pointed him out as a fit instrument for the attorney's designs. Moreover, he was a personal acquaintance of Mr. Sinclair's, which had, of course, assisted in putting that gentleman off his guard. I called to mind the agitation which Mark Raeburn had exhibited on the occasion of the secretary's coming, and his exhilaration of spirits when the ordeal above stairs had been successfully concluded, and recognised their cause.

"Is there no possible way, think you, Mr. Wilde?" inquired I, "whereby this matter may be hushed up and restitution made?"

"It is quite out of the question,"

answered my companion; "for my part, I have done enough already to save the tenants of this house from public shame. It is impossible for us to explain Mr. Alexander Raeburn's absence; and it is necessary on all accounts that his death should be proved. Come—you had better come home with me for the present, since this house will be in the hands of the police before nightfall. I should not be doing my duty if I did not communicate with them and with the Assurance Society at once."

I was about to turn away to accompany my companion from the room, when the voice of the parrot once more was heard in imploring tones: "Dead, dead! think of that! Poor Poll, poor Poll!"

Chico's once ample vocabulary had dwindled down to those few pitiful words. Their eloquence, however, was not lost upon me, and taking up his cage I carried the bird from the deserted room, determined that henceforth, for brother Alec's sake, it should form a part of my own goods and chattels—a resolve on which I had, afterwards, good cause for self-congratulation. It was impossible for me to proceed at once to Stanbrook, since my presence would almost certainly be required in Kirkdale by the authorities, so I gladly accepted Mr. Wilde's offer of hospitality, and, while staying under his roof, I became acquainted, through the investigations that followed, with various particulars respecting the attorney and his son, who both, to my great contentment, contrived to leave England before the law could be brought to bear upon them.

Mark Raeburn's love of speculation had ruined him long before I had made his acquaintance, and when his name and credit in the district still stood high. After losing his own money, he lost that of his wife, who had had a considerable dower of her own, besides that West India estate, her involuntary disconnection with which had made the Emancipation question such a tender topic with her. The knowledge that he had done her this wrong no doubt assisted to give her that supremacy over him, which had ended in an unmitigated despotism. After these mischances, the attorney strove to right matters by speculating with the fortune of his cousin Gertrude, which he also lost. I heard this part of his sad story from her own lips, as she had heard it from his, on that last interview he had with her before his flight. He made a clean breast of all his iniquities so far as she was concerned, and I need not say that she forgave him. Why he did so, I am not certain; but I think it was to exonerate his son from any share in them. Up to the time that that bubble of expectations from brother Alec had burst, I believe John to have been wholly innocent of his father's schemes, as Mark, in his turn, was of his wife's attempted crime. In other respects the attorney and his wife worked together, I have little doubt, and had no secrets from one another. Having once stooped to defraud his cousin, he had no scruples as to his other clients, and almost all my uncle's little property had gone the way of Gertrude's. Mark had disposed of the securities, which were not, and never had been, in Kirkdale bank; and the duplicates I had found were merely imitations of them, far too clumsy to have been concocted by the deft fingers of John Raeburn. Had he been intrusted with the task, my suspicions would probably never have been aroused, and indeed his innocence was established by the fact of his having procured me a sight of the papers, in his father's absence. On the latter's return from the seaside, he had been compelled to make his son his confidant, and henceforth the partner in his frauds. It was John who had written in his uncle's name from Sandibeach, where, perhaps, the old man was already dead, or dying—he had been buried there under the name of Prescott, as was afterwards discovered—and John, under pretence, as usual, of a business journey elsewhere, had gone thither, and been brought back from thence in his uncle's stead, to play the rôle of the sick man at the Priory.

He did so to perfection, including the forging of the receipts of his quarterly payments from the Assurance Office; but I will do him the justice to say that his dishonesty went wholly against the grain with him. He was not, of course, a well-principled lad in any sense, but his nature was neither cruel nor unkind, and I believe revolted against the very scheme which his ingenuity for a time rendered so successful. If poverty be any excuse for crime, it was so in his case (not to mention that he was spurred on by his own parents to commit it), for it turned out that the Raeburns had had little else to maintain them, at the time of my coming to live with them, beyond my premium, and the annual sum paid for my board and lodging; while, afterwards, they lived on the credit accorded to them by reason of their expectations from brother Alec, which they were well aware would never be realised. It was, doubtless, in the embarrassment produced by this state of affairs in its earlier stage, and in the knowledge that his defalcations must needs be brought to light, in case Gertrude should become engaged out of the family, that inspired the attorney with the idea of persuading me that her hand was already promised to John. Very likely the notion of having her for their daughter-in-law had at one time occurred to the old couple, but before my coming to the Priory I am sure that Mrs. Raeburn at least had given up the plan as impracticable. She read Gertrude's character too thoroughly to deceive herself in that respect. It was not till matters grew desperate, that this wretched woman conceived the crime which she had been within such a little of having accomplished; and I again assert my confident belief that neither her husband nor her son were privy to her design. There were degrees and grades of guilt in these three persons, each strongly marked. John's transgression, though he took such an active part in the plot, was almost of a negative character; the attorney, by long misdoing, had become reckless and fraudulent to the core; while Mrs. Raeburn was ruthless from the beginning, and stuck at nothing. Of her I shall presently have a word or two more to say in proof of that harsh judgment.

These facts or convictions did not present themselves to me at once, nor within a brief space; it was weeks before my presence at Kirkdale could be dispensed with by the authorities, and my mind was compelled to concern itself with these sad matters, from the consideration of which it would gladly have escaped. Otherwise, I had sufficiently bitter food for reflection in the position of my own affairs. Not only was Gertrude's fortune lost, but my own little property, which had been confided by Mr. Hastings, along with his own, to the attorney's keeping, was also gone. Not only, therefore, had I no expectations for the future, but no means, however anxious I might be to make up for previous idleness by application to my legal studies, of continuing them. The question was no longer, When should we marry? but, How should we each subsist apart? From the ruins of her property, indeed, the attorney had pointed out how a small income might be derived for Gertrude's maintenance, but the sum was so slender as scarcely to afford her the necessaries of life. She wrote to me hopefully, but I had not the courage to reply to her in a similar strain. I was a beggar; and though the thought seemed to pull my heart up by the roots, I felt that it would be my duty to release her from an engagement, which it might never be in my power to redeem.

If I had had anywhere else whither to betake myself, I should have avoided the temptation of going to the Rectory while Gertrude remained under its roof; but there was no alternative for me in the matter, and so soon as I was permitted to leave Kirkdale I bade good-bye to my kind host, and, sick at heart, departed for my old home.

SERVIA.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THROUGH the unexpected rising in the Herzegovina, Servia, its prince, and people have once more been brought prominently before the world. The enthusiasm of the Servians for the cause of the insurgents runs so high, that probably nothing but the influence of the Great Powers restrains their government from plunging into war with Turkey—though apparently at odds very adverse—on behalf of their struggling Bosnian brethren. The events now occurring, with the important developments which they may any day receive, tend to awaken feelings of interest, greater than Western Europe has ever yet shown, in the past annals and the possible future of the little state, which aspires to be to Slavonian Turkey what Piedmont was to regenerated Italy. The recent history of Servia, moreover, besides its bearing upon the course of events which Time has yet to unfold, possesses many points of interest in itself.

The Servians form a distinct branch of the great Slavonian race: that race spread over so many countries and political divisions, yet so closely united in its sympathies. In common with other Slavonic tribes, the Servians first appeared on the borders of the Roman Empire about A.D. 527. They settled in their present home, the limits of which nearly correspond with the Roman province of Mœsia Superior, in the early part of the seventh century.

Procopius (De Bello Goth. III.) has succinctly sketched the characteristics of the Slavonic tribes when they first pressed upon the Empire of the East:—"The Slavonians," says the Byzantine historian, "do not obey a single master, but live under a democratical government; the gains and losses are common amongst them, and all other things go in the same way. . . . . . They live in miserable huts, standing isolated, and they change their settlements. In a battle many of them fight on foot, armed only with a small target and a lance; they do not wear any armour. They all speak the same very barbarous language, and do not differ much in their exterior. Their complexion is not very white, and their hair is neither fair nor black, but dark. Like the Massagetæ, they lead a rude and wandering life. Their mind is neither malicious nor fraudulent, and they preserve the manners of the Huns in many respects, combined with their simplicity. They possess the greatest part of the farther bank of the Danube."

The Byzantine emperors tacitly countenanced the occupation by the Servians of the country to which they gave their name. For some centuries they remained quietly settled within its boundaries, under the government of various chiefs or krals. These at times afforded to Constantinople the important succour of their warlike nation, when the attacks of the Bulgarians and other tribes on the Eastern frontier menaced, in the tenth century, the very existence of the decaying empire.

During this period the Servians, who had been early converted to Christianity, acquired, through their relations with the Byzantine Greeks, a considerable degree of civilisation, whilst their native vigour and aptitude for war remained unimpaired.

The national power was greatly increased when, towards the twelfth century, the supremacy of one chief, under certain limitations, was established. A succession of enterprising kings then gradually extended Servian power far beyond its early limits—the same, or nearly so, as those which at present distinguish it on the map. Encroachments on the Byzantine Empire, and the conquest or absorption of adjacent Slavonian populations, contributed to build up so powerful a state that, in the fourteenth century, the sovereignty of its monarchs stretched from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. Stephan Doushan (1336—1356) could style himself emperor (Czar) of Servia, King of the Greeks, Bulgarians and Albanians, and Autocrat of various Illyrian provinces lying on the Adriatic.

His banners bore an imperial double eagle, and it is said that he seriously aspired to subvert the remnant of the Byzantine Empire (restricted now to Greece, with parts of the modern Roumelia surrounding the capital) and instal himself at Constantinople. One day, on the occasion of a great festival—that in honour of the Archangel Michael—tradition represents him as addressing to his people the exultant question, "Whither shall I lead you to victory? Towards Greece, or across the Danube?" "Where-ever you lead us, we will follow, glorious Czar!" was the reply.

The reign of Doushan forms the brightest epoch of ancient Servian history. The earliest written records of the country were composed either in his days, or during the reign of his predecessor. King Doushan himself, it is certain, gave to his people a code of laws. These have been characterised as bearing a purer stamp of the primitive Slavonian bent of mind than the laws of other nations of the same race, and are distinguished especially by their spirit of moderation.

Belgrade, the chief city of Servia—the Belgrade of modern times, that is to say, for a city, afterwards destroyed, existed at that spot under the Roman Empire—dates its origin from the reign of Doushan.

The entry of the Turks into Europe, under Orkhan, not only checked the development of the empire so great under Doushan, but, after a struggle of some thirty years, resulted in the extinction of the ancient kingdom of Servia.

Sixty-four years before that memorable day, when Mohammed the Second rode in triumph into Constantinople, the Servian power, after a fierce conflict, had succumbed.

On the plain of Cassova, in the southern corner of his sovereignty, King Lazarus of Servia, at the head of a large army drawn from his proper domains, from Bosnia, Dalmatia, Bulgaria, and Hungary, encountered (1389) Sultan Amurath the First, leading a Turkish host, less strong numerically than that of the Christians, but composed of veteran warriors, flushed with previous victories in Asia and in Europe. The fight was long and terrible. At first the Servians gained ground; but after a time Amurath's son, the famous Bajazet, surnamed for his impetuous valour Ilderim ("Lightning"), succeeded in breaking the Christian ranks. Armed with an iron club, Bajazet himself led on his men, dreadful havoc marking his path on either side. Before the day closed the Turks were everywhere victorious.

The battle ended with a regal tragedy which has since been the ever-recurring theme of national song and lament, and has also supplied the subject of a drama by a modern Servian writer, Milutinowicz.*

King Lazarus, after long combat, being finally made prisoner, was brought, with many noble Servians, before the victorious Turkish sultan. As Amurath received his captives in his tent, one of their number, Milosch Kobilovitch, bowed himself before the throne as if to do reverence; then, suddenly drawing out a dagger which he had concealed beneath his clothes, he stabbed the conqueror to the heart. Two other Servian chiefs, Milan Tepliza and Ivan Kossantschitz, seconded him in this deed of patriotic desperation. The dying Sultan Amurath ordered with his last breath, not only his assassins, but his defeated opponent Lazarus, to be put to death; a sentence which was instantly carried out. So perished the last Servian king, and with him, for over four centuries, the independence of Servia.†

Servia fell, but not ingloriously; for the Turk, it must be remembered was then at the height of his youthful strength, sanguinary fury, and fanaticism; was, in fact, a "quasi-infernal roaring lion of a Turk," as Mr. Carlyle has phrased it, contrasting the Osmanli of that time with the "Caput Mortuum and torpid nuisance" which the sage of Chelsea pronounces him to be now.

All the South Slavonic communities were then involved in disaster. Theirs the ill-fortune to lie, in Eastern Europe, nearest to the Mahometan deluge. It is no disgrace to them that they went down before the mighty storm which passed on to Poland and Hungary, and which, under Solyman the Magnificent (1529), raged round the walls of Vienna itself.

From the epoch of the Turkish conquest, the annals of Servia present only the dry and barren tale of a nation—spirited, but far outmatched—in a state of vassalage to a powerful empire of alien race and religion. Desultory warfare was long waged against the conquerors by isolated bands of Servians. When hard pressed, they could take refuge in the forests or mountain fastnesses; but during four hundred years of Turkish domination, Belgrade and its surrounding country was the only portion of Servian soil over which, at times, the standard of the Crescent was not paramount. The frontier city opposed a desperate resistance to Sultan Solyman in 1522; but, subdued at last, it rested in Turkish possession down to 1688, when the Austrians, under the Elector of Bavaria, succeeded, after a long siege, in taking it by storm.

This capture of Belgrade made great stir at the time throughout Europe. It was thought that great results would follow for Christendom. In an old tract, True Relation of the Siege of Belgrade (London, 1688), occurs the following doggerel verse, anticipating the complete expulsion of the Turks. Even then, it would appear, "the sick man" was thought to be dying!

> Three Bs, of which two are already won,
> Will crown the glory of the work begun.
> Buda, Belgrade, Byzantium once obtained,
> The rest will be but sport and quickly gained.

The success of the Austrians was but transient, however. Two years later the Turks succeeded in recapturing the place.

The vicissitudes of conflict between the German and Turkish empires caused Belgrade, after this, frequently to change hands from Turk to Christian, and vice versâ. In 1693 the Austrians invested it, but the Mussulmans made good their defence. In 1717, however, the famous Prince Eugène—joint-victor with Marlborough over the French—led the forces of the Empire to the siege of Belgrade. After one of the most arduous campaigns he ever undertook, Eugène, by a bold stroke, succeeded in destroying almost the whole of the Turkish army opposing him, and triumphantly entered the city. A considerable portion of Servian territory was brought temporarily under the sway of the Kaiser. A noble German song has celebrated how "Prinz Eugen der edle Ritter" won the great stronghold from the hands of the Mussulmans.

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* Translations of various national songs were made in 1827 by Sir John Bowring; and one of the best of those on the battle of Cassova is included in the Serbski Pesme (Songs of Servia) of Owen Meredith (the present Lord Lytton).

† "The mummy of the canonised King Lazar is to be seen to this day," says a traveller who visited Servia some years ago. "I made a pilgrimage to Vrdnik, a monastery in the Frusca Gora, where his mummy is preserved with the most religious care in the church, exposed to the atmosphere. It is, of course, shrunk, shrivelled, and of a dark brown colour, bedecked with an antique embroidered mantle, said to be the same worn at the battle of Kassova. The fingers were covered with the most costly rings, no doubt since added." (Paton's Servia, London, 1845, p. 227.)

Twenty-two years afterwards the Austrians, unsuccessful in a fresh frontier war, were obliged to relinquish, by treaty, their Servian acquisitions. In 1789 Marshal Loudon captured Belgrade for the emperor, but Austrian weakness again compelled its restitution in 1791. So much for the fortunes of Servia's chief city. Let us now glance at the condition of the people during their long captivity.

The lot of the Servians, during the early period of Turkish rule, was not so intolerable, in a material point of view, as it eventually became. The early sultans, despotic and severe when angered by disobedience or revolt, were yet politic statesmen and good administrators. Unlike their degenerate descendants of the eighteenth century, they themselves held diligent watch over the conduct of the provincial pashas towards the people. Though the Christians were made to feel their social inferiority—were forbidden to carry arms or to enter a town on horseback, and were subjected to many other indignities—they were permitted the undisturbed exercise of their religion, and were, on the whole, neither excessively taxed, or violently treated, by the dominant race. But this state of things gradually faded away, to be succeeded by intolerable oppression in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when sultans of feeble personality—the Ahmeds and the Mustafas—filled the throne of the Solymans and Amuraths.

In proportion as the central power at Constantinople became relaxed, the pashas of the distant provinces disregarded the laws of the empire, and taxed and plundered the Christian population for their own enrichment. The Spahis, or Turkish feudatories, displayed the most overbearing pride; freely indulged in acts of rapine and violence; and often forcibly carried off the wives and daughters of the peasants, to replenish the harems of Turks of high rank. "The fear the poor Christians live in in these parts," says an old traveller, who passed through Servia—a rare journey in those days—at the end of the seventeenth century, "cannot but move us greatly to compassion; we saw them retreat to the woods at the first sight of us, to avoid us, which made us many times ride after them, to undeceive them." (Dr. Edward Browne's Travels, &c.)

Turkish misrule reached its height towards the close of the last century, and, as its natural accompaniment, the elements of revolt were seething among the Christian "rayahs." The remembrance of ancient freedom was still preserved by the national songs; the wrongs of Servia were bewailed, and revenge longed for in every home. A significant custom, which, it is said, still prevails, illustrates the depth of the hatred borne by the Servians to their oppressors.

Whenever, at the close of a feast, it was time for the bowl to circulate, bottles of a native wine, to which had of old been given the repulsive name of "Turk's Blood," were produced. The first person who tasted it would then ask, with affected surprise, "What is this?" To which, some one replying, "It is Turk's Blood," the first speaker, pouring out again, would solemnly rejoin, "Then let it flow freely!"

The forests and mountain defiles, in these times, were filled with "heyducs"—patriot bandits—who counted it glory to waylay, pillage, and kill, by fair means or foul, the tormentors of their country. Upon the deeds of these men the mass of the population looked with scarce-disguised approval. "By robbery was it gotten; by robbery it is torn from them," muttered the rayahs, as they heard some fresh tale of property reft from Turkish travellers by the "heyducs."

The young wife of a noted Servian chief (Veliko) exclaimed, on seeing her husband assume his "heyduc's" dress and accoutrements:

"Woe is me! I have married a robber!"

"Console yourself," he replied, "every man is now a robber!"

Thus, for many years in the latter half of the last century, the Servians were ripening for insurrection and independence; leaders fit to commence and to carry out such a movement only were wanting. Those leaders at length, in succession, appeared — Czerni George and Milosch Obrenovitsch.

George Petrovitsch—Czerni George, of

the Servians; Kara George, of the Turks (both names signifying "Black George")—may, perhaps, be called the Wallace of Servia. Milosch Obrenovitsch, who came after him, may stand, though with less exact parallel, for its Bruce.

Kara George, dim Slavonic hero of these our days, well deserved his sobriquet of "black," as to the origin of which writers on Servia have needlessly puzzled themselves; but which is surely sufficiently accounted for by the man's dark, passionate hardihood. His character presents a combination of heroism, blended with ferocity, which is full of antique grandeur.

Here is a striking incident in the early career of Kara George, who, born about 1770, became in 1804 the awakener and the leader of Servian regeneration.

A "heyduc" in his youth, according to tradition, he, however, considered himself safe in settling down, in primitive rusticity, as grazier and pig-dealer. But either official remembrance of his old offences, or, perhaps, his inability to restrain himself from fresh ones, brought upon him, presently, the evil regard of the Turkish authorities of the district. Conscious that clouds were gathering over him, George resolved on flight. Rousing his aged father, he collected his cattle and household goods, and set forth for Austria.

It would appear that the old man was not aware, at first, whither George was leading him. Deep was his anguish on perceiving that his son's design consisted in their taking refuge in a foreign land. The idea of leaving his beloved Servia, probably for ever, was unbearable to him; and, when they arrived in sight of the River Save, which forms the boundary between Servia and Austria, the old man, forgetting whatever dangers menaced them, with senile dejection implored George to turn back.

"Do not go to Germany, my son," he said. "Let us return. Let us humble ourselves, and we shall obtain pardon. Do not go."

George remained inexorable.

At last the father murmured, "Cross the river, then, alone. I remain in this country."

"How then!" cried Black George, an ebullition of frenzy seizing him; "shall I live to see thee slowly tortured to death by the Turks? It is better that I should kill thee myself at once!"

So saying, he grasped his pistol, and actually shot his father dead on the spot!

As he passed through the next village, this extraordinary man said to the people: "Go, get the old man, who lies yonder, buried for me; and drink, also, for his soul at a funeral feast!" For that purpose he made them a present of the cattle which he had with him, and then crossed the Save.

Returning after some time, when a different pasha ruled in Servia, George took up again his occupation of herdsman and grazier. Stern and taciturn in manner, he nourished secretly his feelings of hatred to the Turks, and longings for the redemption of his country. At this time (1800—1804) no thought of attaining supreme command in an insurrection, still less of rising to be Prince of Servia, had crossed his mind. When, availing themselves of Turkish troubles—Pasha Passwan Oglu's revolt—in the neighbouring province of Bulgaria, the Servians came to a general resolve to stand up in arms for independence, George, who, after a brief deliberation, was acclaimed as generalissimo, at first wished to decline undertaking the responsibilities of leadership. As a final remonstrance, he told the assembled chiefs and elders, frankly, that he feared the inborn violence of his nature unfitted him for supreme command.

"I am of hot temper," he said; "shall want my own way; and know not what acts of passion I may commit when thwarted."

"So much the better," answered the assembly, with hardly a dissentient voice. "It is such a man we would have in these times. Lead us against the Turks, Kara George!"

In the midst of forces largely composed of men of heroic physical build, the attributes of great personal strength and valour conspicuously marked out Kara George. Of lofty stature, spare, broad-shouldered, with black deep-sunken eyes, no one could fail to recognise him in battle; and his mere presence often sufficed to create a panic among the Turks. He preferred fighting on foot, and when engaged with the enemy, always sprang from his horse if he saw a chance of a personal encounter. Though totally uneducated, not knowing how to read or write, he had yet considerable capacity, natural and acquired, for generalship. It is said that he soon became accustomed to dictating despatches with fluency and elegance. The general love of the Servians for poetry and declamation may account for this.

To restore the authority of the sultan, two considerable Turkish armies entered Servia early in the year 1806, one from Bosnia, under Abu-Beker Pasha, and the other from Nissa, in Roumelia, under Ibrahim, Pasha of Scutari. The total of the forces Kara George had at his disposal did not exceed ten thousand, but they were determined men, and Kara George knew well the capabilities of his country for defence. His knowledge of the mountain defiles and the intricacies of the forests served him well. For some months he baffled both armies, and in August, 1806, falling upon the Pasha of Bosnia, he succeeded in driving him back across the Drina with great loss. The Pasha of Scutari found himself unable to cope with George, and in the year 1807 the Servians rejoiced in the entire deliverance of their country from the Turks, the citadel as well as the city of Belgrade being at length wrested from Ottoman hold. A species of military government was now established by the Voyvodes, or chief proprietors of Servia, most of whom had under their command a body of cavalry formed of their friends and tenants. The Voyvodes assembled once a year at Belgrade, under the presidency of Kara George, to deliberate upon affairs of state, whilst a senate of twelve members, one for each district of Servia, was appointed as the permanent executive. George, into whose disposition more ambitious principles had entered than of old, soon found himself troubled by the dissensions and jealousies of the Voyvodes. The latter desired to court a close alliance with Russia, to which policy George, perhaps over-estimating the new-born power of Servia, was not very well inclined. However, in 1809, when Russia was at war with the Porte, he undertook the invasion of Bosnia and the Herzegovina. Crossing the mountains near Simiza, with the object of opening up communications with Montenegro, he at first drove the Turkish forces before him, and laid siege to Novibazar. In this he was unsuccessful, and the south of Servia being menaced by other Turkish forces, he was obliged to return there. The year 1810 was a fortunate one for George, who had meanwhile been induced to embrace the alliance with Russia. With some assistance from them the Servians inflicted a severe defeat on Kurschid Pasha, who had advanced from Nissa at the head of large forces; and not long afterwards George routed another army from Bosnia, and drove it back across the Drina. George availed himself of the éclat of these successes to obtain in 1811 increased personal power in the government, and it seemed that his position was firmly established. It was, however, his last period of triumph.

Whilst governing Servia with almost despotic sway, Kara George retained in his habits many traits of the primitive condition of his early days. The ruler of Servia might sometimes be seen to clear with his own hands a piece of forest land, cut a water-course for a mill, or even put his hand to the plough. He spoiled the insignia of the Russian order, with which he had been decorated, while in the act of fixing a hoop on a cask!

The Russian alliance, to which George had at first been averse, contributed to his downfall. Trusting too much that, in the negotiations for peace with Turkey, Russia would thoroughly protect Servian interests, Kara George did not bethink him of treating warily with the Turks for his own advantage, as his successor the politic Milosch Obrenovitsch would have treated. Moreover, he foolishly neglected, as it would seem, to preserve the Servian fighting power in due discipline and readiness.

These two weaknesses cost him dearly. In 1812 Russia, forewarned of a struggle which might involve her very existence—Napoleon's invasion—made haste to conclude peace with the Porte, and in the treaty signed at Bucharest, only a few stipulations, and those of quite an illusory nature, were inserted on behalf of Servia. The next year, the Porte having its hands free, two formidable Turkish armies advanced to effect the reconquest of the former vassal state. The attack was so sudden, and the Servian preparations so deficient, that the Turks speedily carried everything before them. Kara George seemed paralysed; and, dreading Turkish vengeance, without striking a blow he crossed the Danube with his treasures into Austria, on the third of October, 1813.

Thus terminated, somewhat ignobly, the rule of Kara George over the land he had liberated. His life was to have a more tragic ending, as we shall shortly see. But first let us give a glance at the man who was to replace George—a personage no less extraordinary, but of character quite dissimilar—Milosch Obrenovitsch, to whose exertions, in which craft, audacity, and patriotism were strangely mingled, Servia owes it that she gradually regained her independence, and passed from a period of despair into one of solid prosperity.

THE LAST WISH.

This is all, is it much, my darling? You must follow your path in life,
Have a head for its complex windings, a hand for its sudden strife;
The sun will shine, the flowers will bloom, though my course 'mid them all is o'er,
I would not that those dear living eyes should light in their joy no more;
Only just for the sake of the happy past, and the golden days that have been,
By the love we have loved, and the hopes we have hoped, will you have my grave kept green?

Just a moment in the morning, in the eager flush of the day,
To pluck some creeping weed perchance, or train the white rose spray;
Just a moment to shade my violets from the glare of the noontide heat,
Just a tear and a prayer in the gloaming, ere you leave me with lingering feet.
Ah! it is weak and foolish, but I think that in God's serene,
I shall know, and love to know, mine own, that you keep my grave so green.

I would fain, when the drops are plashing against your window-pane,
That you should be thinking wistfully of my grasses out in the rain;
That when the winter veil is spread o'er the fair white world below,
Your tender hands twine the holly wreaths that mark my rest in the snow.
My clasp on life and life's rich gifts grows faint and cold I ween,
Yet oh! I would hold it to the last—the trust of my grave kept green.

Because it is by such little signs the heart and its faith are read;
Because the natural man must shrink ere he joins the forgotten dead;
The Heavenly hope is bright and pure, and calm is the Heavenly rest,
Yet the human love clings yearningly to all it has prized the best.
We have been so happy, darling, and the parting pang is keen,
Ah! soothe it by this last vow to me—you will watch that my grave keeps green?

THE FASHIONS OF THE FUTURE.

It is often remarked that lawyers, doctors, and divines see a great deal more of the worst side of mankind than other folks, and that their view of the world must necessarily be gloomy. Ailments mental and physical come under their notice all day, and every day. Our sorrows, our weaknesses, our follies, our infirmities, and our—well, our lawyer is bound to know how close we sail to the wind at times. If no man can be a hero to his valet-de-chambre, how can he keep up an heroic appearance to his doctor, who cares nothing about the behaviour of his client at the battle of Dustynullah, looking upon him only as the envelope or habitation of a most interesting case of nutmeg liver? But if lawyers and doctors, divines and valets-de-chambre see mankind from an unheroic point of view, what opinion of it can be held by the great army of artificers who minister to its outward adornment? To the rank and file of mankind, Hyde Park, a military review, or one of Her Majesty's drawing-rooms, affords a spectacle of beauty and symmetry calculated to produce ambition if not envy; but how do these things affect those who contribute the trappings of splendour? What does that eminent artist Mr. Roquelaure, when he takes his "constitutional" in the Park, think of the massive broad shoulders of his American client General Hezekiah Hardpan, and what passes in his mind as he walks down St. James's-street on a drawing-room day, and notes the fine broad chest of Cornet Plantagenet Plunger? While less well-instructed persons of the male sex gaze in admiration on the beautiful outline of Lady Diana Pranceleigh, as she canters up Rotten Row on her superb chestnut, what is the private opinion of Mr. Paddington, the famous riding-habit maker; and what does Madame La Mode think of the charming female figures at the court balls, at which she occupies a snug corner in the gallery? These excellent people are behind the scenes. They know all the weak points of the leaders of fashion. They can tell you exactly why a style, which is followed by "the ruck" in the wild-goose flight of fashion, was introduced to bring out a good point or to tone down a defect in the anatomy of a royal, exalted, or serenely transparent personage. They can inform you why towering "window shutter" shirt-collars were introduced to hide an ugly scar in the neck of one, and the low "turned down" style brought in to suit the bull-neck of another. They can explain in an instant why crinoline was made the fashion by one great lady, and why the graceful "ruff" was brought to the fore by another. This is a terrible knowledge, and should weigh down the possessor with a sense of responsibility.

Revolving these things in my mind, and greatly awed by the considerations suggested by them, I determined to seek an interview with Madame La Mode. I had heard much of Madame, and had seen many of her creations. I knew that the great—the very great—ladies were attired by her, and that she was the prime authority, not on the fashions one sees in every window and in every newspaper, but on what is "going to be" worn, the shapes and styles which have hardly yet assumed form and life, and may be revealed to the million in the course of six, twelve, or mayhap eighteen months. I was aware that the ordinary position of a mere customer would avail me little. Unless introduced by the wearer of a coronet, I should hardly be admitted to the presence of Madame at all, and should even then be compelled to mind my own business, and refrain from asking questions. How I obtained an introduction and a conference is a secret of my own which I intend to keep.

If I were an imaginative person, I should now proceed to depict in glowing language the magnificence of the boudoir into which I was introduced, and the gorgeous costume in which the arbitress of fashion was attired, but truth compels me to reveal that I was received in a snug private office, handsomely, but simply furnished, and that the dress of Madame La Mode herself, was—albeit of the latest style—quiet and subdued in tone, almost to excess. So sombre was her costume that it afforded no scope for description, the only noticeable features being a superb "cincture" of choice goldsmith's work, and adorned with many pendants, hanging low over the hips like the belt of a knight in the days of Cressy and Poictiers, and a cravat of rich pillow-lace, tied twice, carelessly, reminding me of the historic Steenkirk, hurriedly donned by the French dandies, while hastening to battle. Madame received me most graciously, but when I stated the object of my visit, warned me against indiscretion.

"I shall have much pleasure in showing you what is doing, and in telling you what is about to be done, but you must promise to keep my name a profound secret, as well as the names of the personages whose costumes I will show you. I need not tell you that if you printed an exact description of the dress to be worn by the Duchess of Daintyshire, and mentioned her Grace's name, the chances are that she would give the costume to her maid, instead of wearing it herself."

"Discretion," I protested, "is a quality on which I pride myself. The true test of excellence in my profession is the knowledge, not of what to say, but of what not to say."

"I am delighted to hear it, although it sounds to me as something new; but, frankly, what do you want to know?"

"Briefly, then, the future."

"The future," said Madame La Mode, thoughtfully, "is difficult to predict. There are indications from which it may be guessed, but you, of course, understand that until shapes are actually worn, they are uncertain. I have an idea—an inspiration—call it as you please: I realise it, but in the process of realisation it changes from day to day. Outlines and effects which are perfect—while in the mind's-eye—vary in the process of production, till they almost lose their identity. My object is to produce what is not the published and recognised fashion. I seek the original. When my fashion becomes what is called 'the rage,' I have done with it. It is then nearly, if not quite, vulgar, and I turn aside to something entirely different. Not so pretty, perhaps, not so effective. No matter, so long as it is not what is generally worn. I will give you an instance of this. Jet trimmings have been 'the rage,' but I use no jet now, and have replaced it by heavy gold and silver braid—not in fancy patterns, but in perpendicular lines—to assist in producing the effect I now seek for."

"What," I asked, breathlessly, "may that effect be?"

"Slenderness; call it thinness and flatness, if you will. The reign of the Sylph has returned, but crinoline dies very hard. It is long since the female outline resembled that of a pen-wiper, spreading out towards the base; but crinoline has clung to the figure with extraordinary tenacity. You will recollect that, a short time ago, when waists were worn as short as they are now extravagantly long, they were very short in front, giving a curious expression to the figure. This was enhanced by artificial means, and the style, such as it was, lasted for a while. Again, as the front and sides of the dress became flatter, it was puffed out behind to a great extent. Puffs and bows abounded at the back; in fact, the entire dress seemed dragged away to make the puffs and train. This is to be abolished."

"You astonish me! Is the figure to be flat all over?"

"The flatter the better. There is no

longer to be any crinoline at all. The figure is to be shown as it is."

"I am delighted. The Veracities are at last receiving due honour. But is there to be nothing? No crinoline at all, no—ahem—'improvers' of any kind?"

"Nothing," answered Madame. "You speak of 'improvers.' The only way to improve the figure now is by diet and constant exercise. It must be straight—straight and flat; everything must be brought down to produce the perfect sylph—not angular—if possible; but even angularity would be preferable to robustness."

"Good heavens! But how is this to be done?"

"By using the self-denial of men in training. You gentlemen are very unobservant not to have noticed that ladies, just now, miss no opportunity of taking severe exercise. Do you, in your innocence, suppose that walking with the guns, skating in hot weather, and the rest of it, is done for the fun of the thing? Not at all. Women have an instinct of approaching fashions, and know they must get down their figures for the next season."

"But cannot this be done without working themselves to death and destroying their good looks?"

"They are sure to look well if they are in the fashion. And you see that I cannot help them very much. It is easy to add, but difficult to take away. A few years ago, anybody who was not deformed could be made to look well; but now——"

"Cannot the artist do much to reduce size, or, at least, produce the appearance of thinness?"

"Something, of course. This will be effected by making the dress fit closely until almost on the ground. It will absolutely cling to the figure. The 'cuirass' idea will prevail: the upper part of the dress will be like a corset, and the long waist would be impossible with 'improvers' of any kind."

"Am I then to suppose that we are coming back to the style of the French Directory? Are we to have Coan robes—the diaphanous toilettes worn by the 'Merveilleuses?' Are our wives and sisters about to make themselves as much like Madame Récamier, or Madame Tallien, or Josephine Beauharnais, as possible? Will they come to scanty muslins—damped to make them cling to the figure? Do they want to look like Canova's dancing-girl, for instance?"

"Hardly. You see old fashions are revived, but with an alteration. No ancient style is ever resuscitated in its integrity; the character may be preserved, but with many modifications of detail. In the dresses worn under the first French Republic, the Directory, and the Empire, the tightly-fitting robe tapered downwards towards the feet, and seemed to embrace the ankles. It did not reach the ground. The new style will be much longer, and will have a train."

"This is an important innovation."

"You see there must be a difference. The lower part of the dress will shortly resemble a column with a base springing out at the hinder side—not gradually from the waist, as you see on everybody now, but suddenly, sharply—a train which will twist about the feet of the unskilful, and prove a snare to the unwary."

"This effect might be produced by the Greek style, as it was called, with the short waist and perpendicular skirt one sees in old portraits; but how is it to be combined with the long-waisted 'cuirass?'"

"It will be produced. When a fashion is wanted, the artist will find a way to supply it."

"Pending this revolution, what is being worn?"

"Everything which fits closely, which depicts the figure exactly—which reveals Nature as she really is."

"I am glad to hear it. What colours do you find the best for expressing this new idea?"

"Soft colours—not the washed-out, faded shades which were recently worn, but rich, soft colours which express the outline without accenting it. For instance, prune colour, dark, deep, and rich; scabious—a deep vinous purple; sultan—a variety of Turkey red; and Indian red, a colour well known to artists. Nile-water, moonlit gray, washy blues, greens, and pinks are things of the past. Those pale colours were trying things to the complexion, and required much art to carry them off. So far as colour is concerned, we are in a better period. The new theory of effect is the contrast, not of colour, but of material. Instead of putting together various colours or shades of the same colour, we produce our costume from a single colour, represented in various surfaces. As in architecture you take the red of brick, the red of Dumfries stone, and the red of terra cotta to produce an effect, so do we put together velvet, silk, and satin of precisely the same hue, getting our effect out of the contrast of material. Difference of texture gives us all the 'character' we want."

"So much for dresses. But for wraps—as I must perforce irreverently call them?"

"There, indeed, is much scope for imagination. But while these are being brought in, let me show you a costume for a peeress."

It was gray, of a light shade in some material made of the wool of the Cashmere goat, or of the vicuna of the Andes; exquisitely soft to the touch. The—well the lower department was trimmed with braid; the "polonaise" was garnished with the gray fur of Astrakhan; the cuffs and "cuirass" were of that fur entirely. The colour was uniform throughout—a delicate gray—but the style was produced by the simple difference of texture, braid, fur, and cloth, displaying each other's beauty. There was also a costume of rich black silk, with what I am told are called "illusion" sleeves of thinner stuff, gorgeously trimmed with perpendicular rows of gold French braid—a splendid affair. There were, moreover, divers dresses of that beautiful shade called "treble cream," delicious in its golden softness. As these visions passed before me, I became dazzled with ideas of form and colour, and demanded, in my mildest manner—mantles.

"Of mantles," said Madame, "we have variety enough. There is the long coat of soft brown material, with a hood, if not useful, still ornamental and stylish. There is the long silk mantle, lined or not lined with fur, and covered with rich fringe. You will observe that these are curiously formed in the sleeve. In this, the latest idea, you will see that the sleeve is double. There is a practicable sleeve, and another supplementary sleeve, which hangs down flatly, and simply gives style to the garments. Look at that specimen in light gray. It is trimmed with the feathers of the Russian diver. To make a mantle and muff, seventy or eighty birds must die."

"Unlucky diver," I thought, but kept my reflections to myself.

"You will also remark," said Madame, "that the majority of these mantles are trimmed either with feathers or fur, and that the fur does not lie flatly, but porcupine fashion. That mantle you are now looking at is trimmed with the feathers of a choice bird. Do you know what it is?"

With some difficulty I recognised an old friend, the Argus pheasant, but strangely translated.

"The feathers," continued Madame, "are reversed. In the bird they overlap and form a sort of coat of mail—useful to the bird, perhaps, but of no service to us. To suit the fashion, each individual feather has been set up against the grain, so that the fabric resembles a piece of shell-work, and conveys a ruff-like impression."

"I observe. But why this rage for bristly effects?"

"I must once more tell you that fashion does not proceed by sudden jerks. To the uninitiated this may appear to be the case, but to us, who are better informed, it is easy to trace every idea from its initiation to its elaboration. From the ruff—an excellent style for a long-necked, sloping-shouldered model—we have gradually advanced to the ruff of fur, pretty and comfortable. Our best mantles express this idea. The fur trimming of sable, black or silver fox, is continued around the neck in ruff-like fashion, and has just now developed into a new form."

"Indeed! And what form?"

"Look. In this model you will see the fur trimming simply running round the neck; in that you behold the fur collar, so to speak, loosened from the neck, and shaping itself into a boa."

"Like Hercules, I knew the boa in my cradle. But, do you tell me that the ancient boa, which encircled the scraggy necks of my maiden aunts, who have forgotten to die and leave me their money, is to be worn again?"

"Undoubtedly. Some day the shawl will come in again. As for the boa, nothing admits of more style in wearing it. Look at that boa of black fox. It is costly, I admit; but look at its facility in expressing the character of the wearer. It may be simply elegant, tied thus; or attractive, in this way; or stern and repellent, thus. The boa is plastic. The wearer may convey whatever impression she pleases."

"This, indeed, is a revelation. But what is that garment with 'chic' in every fold?"

"Oh! that is hardly quite novel. We have made, at least, half-a-dozen of them. It is a lady's box-coat."

A box-coat it was, sure enough. Shade of Tom, Jerry, and Logic, it was a Corinthian upper Benjamin!

"Observe the minuteness of every

detail," said Madame; "note the expression of the long-waisted back. Mark the sporting cut of the sleeves. Count the triple cape, which gives character to the whole! You may recollect the period of Waterford?"

"Pardon me, Madame; I am wicked, perhaps, but not old."

"This is the gentleman's box-coat of those days. What can be more charming, on the top of a drag, on a showery spring day?"

"I am amazed. We live in a great period. We are to have the age of the Merveilleuses, of the Dandies, of the Bucks, and the Bloods, brought before us. Can we not invent anything new for ourselves?"

"There is no such thing as original invention. You may modify, you may select, you may adapt, you may apply, but you cannot invent. The adhesive style is but a revival of the fashion of the Directory and the First Empire, and this was a fancied imitation of the Greek and Roman dress. The sandal shoes were but part of this revival of the antique. As we had our Grecian bend a few years ago, so had our grandmothers the Grecian lounge. Hoop skirts were done to death by Margaret of Valois. You cannot invent anything new in houses. You imitate the Venetian Gothic—as I catch an idea from a picture by Titian—you copy the Queen Anne architecture as I put on a lace cravat; you shriek about the 'antique,' as I put you into classic costumes; you fancy you make new furniture and new pottery, while you imitate the Moorish, the Hispano-Moresque, the Chinese, and the Japanese styles. You take your plays and your books from the——but you know this better than I can tell you. Show me anything original in any other walk of art, and I will match it by an invention of my own."

But by this time I was not disposed to dispute anything that Madame might choose to assert, and I went meekly on my way, feeling once more the truth that there is "nothing new under the sun."

HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES.

Naturally, we ourselves are that part of the world about whom exists every information. Light falls upon us plentifully. But for what purpose does the other half rise? At what time does the other half set? How much money does the other half put into its pocket, for the work it does between its uprising and its lying down, daily? It is a blank. To supply which a peep into an underlying layer of the London world has been made, the results of which shall be hereby given.

Plenty of men, it has been discovered, for so many shillings per week, and for so many hours per day, perform mysteries. Of these mysteries no elucidation can be, no elucidation shall be, attempted. These men are by trade chill fitters, wet hacklers, skivers and pasters, springers and timers, removers, nailers-out, tuck-pointers. Plenty of other men grow and feed, and sleep and wake, to be roughers, Forrell workers, colour-cakers, fret-cutters, cutters and scorers, moulding-stickers, wirers and tyers, blockers, pullers, pickers, and driers and fillers; the last turning out to be something in the tobacco-trade, in which, also, there are men spending their lives as hands for the pan. Descending a little from these regions of bewilderment on to commoner but still curious ground, we find men fixed in the one calling of stopperers; of setters-on; of stoners; of brush-borers (boring holes into brush-backs to receive the bristles); of mop-makers; of military busby hands; and of lustre mounters; while others get their living as dippers, soda-water bottlers, banjo makers, fancy soap stampers, pianoforte-key cutters (a perfectly distinct trade being pianoforte-key finishers), wire-bust makers, court-plaster makers, deformity instrument makers (preference being given to such leading hands as can forge their own work), packers, unpackers, and, more mysteriously still, there are men accustomed to use spokeshave and planes.

Proceeding, we find men advertised for, who are well up in frying fish and peeling potatoes; who are accustomed to mind baked-potato cans; who are pie makers, used to the pie and eel; who are comfit-makers, used to steam-pans; who are accustomed to open oysters; who are vegetable cooks. Accompanying these are men used to corks; who can get up clubs; who have a thorough knowledge of dressing; who are dollymen, or experienced in washing by hand-punch; who can push the sale of hand-made Glasgow biscuits, or have no objection to pushing that readier article of propulsion—a truck; who can rub down and flat; who are used to the round knife, or to the ground-off saw; who can do a round; who can stuff well; who are milkers; feeders; used to boiling-room; to carcase-work; to hammer and shovel;

and who can kill. Some men, be it known further, are clickers; some are webbers; some are rough-stuff cutters; some are lasters; some are paste fitters; children's pump men; flowerers; military heelers; leather-strap binders; stabbers, and finishers. Some are sew-round hands; some are operators on sole-sewers; some are needle and thread hands; some, again, are cleaners-up. Each member of this last group belongs to the boot and shoe trade; the divisions being further sectioned off, in a byway sort of manner, into finishers on women's; finishers on light women's; finishers on children's; finishers on light children's; and—a little more bravely—finishers on men's. Remarking upon the said divisions and sub-divisions, it must be said that they are undoubtedly very odd. Turning the inquiry, for the present, on this one pivot only, is the term boot-maker a delusion? Can one man no more make a pair of boots, than another can make the symbolic pin? It would appear so. Boots have—nay, a solitary boot has—to be clicked, to be rough-cut, to be lasted, to be riveted, to be webbed, to be paste-fitted, flowered, military-heeled, sewn round, bound at the strap, stabbed, finished, cleaned-up, to say nothing of chosen, tried on, fitted, sold; and a small battalion of men would be required for it. No blame to the British workman for quailing, single-handed, from the undertaking, and rejecting it!

Other mysteries are brought to light when another step is taken. In the tin-trade there are bright hands, and general hands, and common hands, and jobbing hands; there are fish-kettle makers, tea-kettle makers, large size water-pot makers, slop-pail makers; there are box hands, case hands, bowl hands, colander hands; men for zinc work accustomed to machines; there are men for every branch imagination can supply, and men keeping as sedulously to their branch as if it would be slaughter to go an inch beyond. Among tailors, there are basters, pressers, cutters, coat hands, good coat hands, best coat hands, plain coat hands, frock-coat hands, trousers hands, vest hands, jobbing hands, finishers after machines. The same man who basted, couldn't finish; the man who finished, wouldn't be demeaned by (or entrusted with, whichever way it goes) the first stitch. It is the refinement of trade economy, miles beyond the boundary conceived by Adam Smith; and it accounts for the cheapness, and real or apparent excellence, of modern manufacture. Whether it produces excellence in the modern man is a question. A man might find it very pleasing to stamp fancy soap, for example; but when the man has to keep on stamping fancy soap for a week, for a month, for a year, and has never to melt it, never to scent it, never to cake it, never to pack it (all these being the department or the "line" of another), the occupation must become somewhat wearying. When a man, too, for another example, has become used to a dog-stamping machine, with light hammer (as men do), he may think the use delightful, and get much honour from the observance; but, surely, there will come a time when to stamp dogs, albeit with a light hammer, will grow cramping to the intellect. At any rate, excuses could be made then if an unhappy stamper discovered all at once that his life was a mistake. If he looked regretfully, let it be put, at the announcements of "Businesses for Disposal;" wishing he had made himself owner of such one of these as had been found within his means. Might he not have taken, as people of his degree do take, a shop in the sweets and general line, going for a few pounds? Or a wardrobe business, eight pounds, guaranteed more than a living, with no previous knowledge necessary? Then if neither of these hit his fancy, his choice need not have been in the least limited. He could have bought a milk walk, old established; doing six barn-gallons daily, full price; easy round; fifty pounds to pay for all, including a good perambulator. He could have bought a shop for coals, coke, wood, sweets, and general, fifteen pounds the lot; or a coffee-house, with good opening for joints, trade twelve pounds weekly; or a cigar and tobacconist's, in a good thoroughfare, surrounded by theatres and carriage manufactories. Turning from these, fastidiously, or with a sigh, there might have been investment in a fish shop, wet, dry, and fried; in another, confined to fried and dried, but with a hopeful opening for wet; in a third, dried and shell; in a fourth, fried, with alamode potatoes; in a fifth, comprehending the whole, and consisting of a snug little shop, in an excellent position, with stabling, four rooms, smoke-hole, side entrance, low rent, and gas laid on. Stewed eels, again, might be thought of. A shop selling these, and doing coffee as well, can be had very cheap; one, for soup also and baked potatoes, would have only a small sum asked for it, if taken at once; another, going grandly into pie and mashed potatoes (to mash, requiring more science than to bake), would cost as much as sixty pounds, but would take nine pounds over its counter weekly, to quickly tone this large sum down and mitigate it. Then a barber's business might have its attractions. One, including hair-cutting as well as shaving, in a fine position, and old-established, would "do" as much as over two pounds a week. Or there is baking. Such a business, doing ten sacks per week; small goods and bakings; good out-door connection; new barrow; two ovens; all newly done up; could be had, a bargain. A smaller affair, doing seven sacks counter, that should do fifteen (only doesn't), and that is managed by a lady (which may account for it), might change hands for fifty pounds. The same price would give greengrocery, fruit, coals, tobacco, sweets, toys, fine corner premises, nine rooms, large warehouse, stock, fixtures, scales, weights, measures, sacks — everything; with a rent at "the same figure," and forty pounds of it let off. Beer-houses, too (free), in central beer-drinking neighbourhoods, doing genuine trades of thirty shillings daily, might seem enticing; and also shops for cigars and sweets, though they are to be parted with through affliction, and have domestic accommodation limited to one bed-room and a neat back-parlour. As has been put, then, if such businesses as these are looked at by a poor stamper, longingly, need there be wonder or indignation? There would be variety in them, clearly; there would be incident; they would hold times and tides when a man might be pressed, but when, also, he might rest; when he might turn from whelk to periwinkle, from haddock to eel, from frying to baking, from smoke-hole to snug shop, feeling refreshment from the change of which he would never be conscious whilst cutting fret, whilst pointing tuck, whilst skiving, scoring, hacking, whilst being (incessantly) a hand for the pan.

Attention must now be given to that better half of the world's other half—Women. If men's work be cut up, divided, women's work is minced. That is not at all too fine a word for it. In the one entirely new and vast trade of machine-sewing—modern necessity's most recent invention—there is copious proof of it, strong and positive. Young women are wanted, by the scores of scores, to work on Howe's machines, on Thomas's, on the Bonnaz, or Wilcox and Gibbs's, on Wheeler's, on Singer's, on Clegg's, on Wilson's, on Grover's, on Baker's, on the Excelsior. Being accustomed to one, it is not hoped the women will have brain enough to adapt themselves to another; so the particular "make" is advertised, to prevent waste of material and loss of time. Then when the right women are found for the right machines, the sorting and sifting and sub-division recommence. Some women are only clever at tweed costumes; some only at stuff dresses; some only at white skirts. Other women never travel out of jackets; out of wrist-bands; out of infants' boots; out of pleated sets; out of boys' plain suits; out of stay-work, bag-work, infants' bibs, and button-holes. Women of one sort are tuckers; women of another sort are tackers; other sorts, again, are toppers, makers up, runners, banders, turners, stitchers, Lancashire trimmers (good hands can earn from twenty-five to thirty-shillings weekly, working eight hours a day), vampers, braiders, embroiderers, beaders, feather-stitchers, quilters, flowerers, adjusters, lisse ruchers, tweed hat stitchers; hands for Oxford shirts, regatta shirts, blue serge shirts; for travelling bags, for ruffles, for waistcoats, skirts, polonaises, mantles, pinafores, bodies and muslin tucks. It seems incredible. Why cannot the same woman tack and tuck, and top and turn, and trim, giving a feather-stitch and a finish, no matter whether the skirt or body be tweed, or silk, or calico? To simply tack a garment, to be for ever simply tacking garments, must give very little opportunity or stimulus to taste and to ability. Think, too, of always vamping, of always running, of always putting on beads, and braid, and band. The women, however, in these cases are (the customary) slaves. Celerity is wanted; goods are wanted, produced at the lowest cost. Let one woman adjust the roomful of machines, therefore; let a second fold for them; let a third tack; let a fourth stitch; let others come in to flower, to quilt, to button-hole, to cord, and finish, and make up: each garment passing from hand to hand, and each woman ready when it is her time. In no other way could prices be what prices are, could garments have their present "cut," and "style," and elegance, and fashion. It is a necessity, to which the modern young woman must bow.

The same obligation exists in making

ties. There are "hands," in this trade, for fronts, for bands, for ends, for knots, for bows; hands for Duke's ends, for Stanleys, for fitting, for sewn lace, for muslin, for bow cards; hands for general work; hands for all parts, who, also, can slip-stitch. In the trade of artificial flowers, some women mount, some prepare, some make bunches, grass, fuchsias, roses, buds, leaves; some are engaged on jet work, crape work, bugle work, small work; and the rose department, again, is divided into women who do the stuck-roses, the silk, and the threaded; to say nothing of those who cut, and who are able to keep stock and to look up orders. Let a hint about feathers follow this about flowers. There are women who scrape feathers; there are women who curl feathers (they get fourteen shillings weekly); there are women who dye feathers, and women who are only allowed to sew. In the frizette trade, there are women who do stems (with the sub-divisions of stems mohair and stems fibre); there are women who do rolls, and hard rolls; who do weaving, plaits, covers, and pin curls. To successfully manufacture bonnets and bonnet-shapes (without entrenching on the art of millinery proper) there are many sub-divisions more. Some women can only apply themselves to willow-sewing (to the best effect); some to chip; some to straw; some to Manilla; some to Paris net; some to paper; some to goffered braid. Some women are split-sewers; some are crown-turners; some are wirers, trimmers, finishers; others are known as blockers, and hands for fancy, for white braid, for coronets, for Dolly Vardens, for block chip, and for tulle. Of ironers, again, there is quite a mosaic of variety. Dyers want ironers of an express sort; dressmakers want girls to press; then follow ironers as commonly understood, branching off into women for such defined articles as skirts, costumes, polonaises, pinafores, baby-linen, new shirts (the pay is one shilling and five pence a dozen for these); for gents' collars, fronts, and cuffs; for ladies' collars, cuffs, and sets; and including women accustomed to the polishing, and those who can take the run of the board.

But it would be wearying to define the divisions of every trade in which women are employed. The subject shall be left, with a little supplement that certainly is of great importance. There is a loud outcry now for work for women. If a note of another cry be listened to, it will be found to be just as loud for women who will only be so good as to work. Many trades, in this present notice, have been touched upon; domestic service has never even had a hint; the large openings of sick-nursing, of teaching, of selling, of clerkship, of the decoration that nearly reaches fine art, are too well known to need bringing to the light; and yet, the occupations remaining that women are invited to follow are too numerous for the space here available, and their variety is incredible. To give a hint of them—they are lacquering, staining, French-polishing, paper-colouring, japanning, relief-stamping, cameo-stamping, burnishing, cementing, numerical printing, note-paper folding, waste-paper sorting, photographic-printing, black-bordering, and the outline-colouring of texts and flowers. To give another hint, women, if they choose, may be military braiders, beaders of lace (the advertisers say it is a remunerative pastime), tassel-workers, fringers, netters, seal-sewers, vellum-sewers, canvas-sewers (those used to tents), carpet-sewers, book-sewers, collaters, folders, crinoline-steelers, pleaters for ball-dresses, for kilts, and holland costumes, rag sorters (at which they can earn twenty-four shillings a week), embroideresses on crape, parasol liners, umbrella-seamers, horsehair-drawers, human-hair-weavers, hair-brush-drawers, muff-stuffers, muff-liners, lace-menders, cutters-up of patterns of dress-materials to send through the post, for which last pretty piece of neatness and method they will obtain a salary of ten shillings a week and a daily tea. There is the business of label-making, again; and labellers wanted in the sauce trade, with a little girl to fill. So far, too, has the barrier between masculine and feminine handicraft been successfully beaten down, that advertisements can be read for young girls accustomed to box. To all these occupations, though, there will, no doubt, be quick and hot objection. It will be said that women must go from home to follow them; that women must sit in work-rooms, that women must have companions this way from whom they would rather recoil. It is true, every clause of it. But a brave woman, having to face life in earnest, would never fear it. If she were a broken-down lady, reduced, with no training, no brain, no glimmer of stoutness and adaptability, the thought of buckling-to in such a manner could never for a moment be entertained. If she were a piece of young gentility—fine, flimsy, and utterly incapable — she would only want the name of such work as could be done in finery, for the sake of buying more finery, without the chance of her fingers getting soiled. There are men of these classes, as well as women. With either sex, if battle-time comes, these can fight no battle, and simply trail weakly off to that Protestant Purgatorium, the wall. But the majority of English women have the true heroine blood in them. They know how to keep good, even away from the shadow of home; they know how to sit in a workroom and purify the tone of it; they know how to choose their companions, and yet not to insult those they may think it better to reject. If it has happened that many have not yet thought of applying this knowledge, of taking it into the paths and by-paths here indicated, and heroically treading them, it has been most likely because the same do not lie so much upon the surface, and they have never heard of their existence. That thousands of women do get their living in these ways, however, is absolutely certain. That other thousands will be grateful for acquaintance with them, is, possibly, equally true.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLV.

The letter to Lord Seely was duly written, and this time in Castalia's own words. Algernon refused to assist her in the composition of it, saying, in answer to her appeals, "No, no, Cassy; I shall make no suggestion whatsoever. I don't choose to expose myself to any more grandiloquence from your uncle about letters being 'written by your hand, but not dictated by your head.' I wonder at my lord talking such high-flown stuff. But pomposity is his master weakness."

Castalia's letter was as follows:

"Whitford, November 23rd.

"Dear Uncle Val,—I am sure you will understand that I was very much surprised and hurt at the tone of your last letter to Ancram. Of course, if you have not the money to help us with, you cannot lend it. And I don't complain of that. But I was vexed at the way you wrote to Ancram. You won't think me ungrateful to you. I know how good you have always been to me, and I am fonder of you than of anybody in the world except Ancram. But nobody can be unkind to him without hurting me, and I shall always resent any slight to him. But I am writing now to ask you something that 'I wish for very much myself;' it is quite my own desire. I am not at all happy in this place. And I want you to get Ancram a berth somewhere in the Colonies, quite away. It is no use changing from one town in England to another. What we want is to get 'far away,' and put the seas between us and all the odious people here. I am sure you might get us something if you would try. I assure you Ancram is perfectly wasted in this hole. Any stupid grocer or tallow-chandler could do what he has to do. Do, dear Uncle Val, try to help us in this. Indeed I shall never be happy in Whitford. — Your affectionate niece, C. Errington.

"Give my love to Aunt Belinda if she cares to have it. But I daresay she won't.—C. E."

"I think my lord will not doubt the genuineness of that epistle!" thought Algernon, after having read it at his wife's request.

Then the fly was announced, and they set off together to pass the evening at the elder Mrs. Errington's lodgings. The Blue Bell driver touched his hat in a very respectful manner. His master's long-standing account was unpaid, but he continued to receive, for his part, frequent half-crowns from Algernon, who liked the immediate popularity to be purchased by a gift somewhat out of proportion to his means. Indeed, our young friend enjoyed a better reputation amongst menials and underlings than amongst their employers. The former were apt to speak of him as a pleasant gentleman who was free with his money; and to declare that they felt as if they could do anything for young Mr. Errington, so they could! He had such a way with him! Whereas the mere payment of humdrum debts excites no such agreeable glow of feeling, and is altogether a flat proceeding.

"What o'clock shall we say, Castalia?" asked her husband, as they alighted at Mrs. Thimbleby's door.

"Tell him to come at half-past ten," returned Castalia.

It chanced that David Powell was re-entering his lodgings, at the moment the younger Erringtons reached the door. He stood aside to let the lady pass into the house before him, and thus heard her answer. The sound of her voice made him start, and bend forward to look at her face, when the light from the open door fell upon it. She turned round at the same instant, and the two looked full at each other. David Powell asked Mrs. Thimbleby if that lady were not the wife of Mr. Algernon Errington.

"Yes, Mr. Powell, she is his wife; and more's the pity, if all tales be true!"

"Judge not uncharitably, sister Thimbleby! Nor let your tongue belie the gentleness of your spirit. It is an unruly member that speaks not always out of the fulness of the heart. The lady seems very sick, and bears the traces of much sorrow on her countenance."

"Oh yes, indeed, poor thing! Sickly enough she looks, and sorry. Nay, I daresay she has her own trials, but I fear me she leads that pleasant young husband of hers a poor life of it. I shouldn't say as much to anyone but you, sir, for I do try to keep my tongue from evil-speaking. But had you never seen her before, Mr. Powell?"

Powell answered musingly, "N—no—scarcely seen her. But I had heard her voice."

Mrs. Errington received her son and daughter-in-law with an effusive welcome. She was so astonished; so delighted. It was so long since she had seen them. And then to see them together! That had latterly become quite a rare treat. The good lady expatiated on this theme, until Castalia's brow grew gloomy with the recollection of her wrongs, her solitary hours spent so drearily, and her suspicions as to how her husband employed the hours of his absence from her. And then Mrs. Errington began playfully to reprove her for being dull and silent, instead of enjoying dear Algy's society now that she had it! "I am sure, my dear Castalia," said the elder lady with her usual self-complacent stateliness, "you won't mind my telling you that I consider one of the great secrets of the perfect felicity I enjoyed during my married life to have been the interest and pleasure I always took—and showed that I took—in Dr. Errington's society."

"Perhaps he liked your society," returned Castalia with a languid sneer, followed by a short bitter sigh.

"Preferred it to any in the world, my dear!" said Mrs. Errington, mellifluously. She said it, too, with an aplomb and an air of conviction that mightily tickled Algernon, who, remembering the family rumours which haunted his childhood, thought that his respected father, if he preferred his wife's society to any other, must have put a considerable constraint on his inclinations, not to say sacrificed them altogether to the claims of a convivial circle of friends. "The dear old lady is as good as a play!" thought he. Indeed he thoroughly relished this bit of domestic comedy.

"But then," proceeded Mrs. Errington, as she rang the bell to order tea, "I have not the vanity to suppose that he would have done so without the exercise of some little care and tact on my part. Tact, my dear Castalia—tact is the most precious gift a wife can bring to the domestic circle. But the Ancrams always had enormous tact—give us some tea, if you please, Mrs. Thimbleby, and be careful that the water boils—proverbial for it, in fact!"

Algernon thought it time to come to the rescue. He did not choose his comfort to be destroyed by a passage of arms between his mother and his wife, so he deftly turned the conversation to less dangerous topics, and things proceeded peacefully until the tea was served.

"Who was that man that was coming in to the house with us?" asked Castalia, as she sipped her tea from one of Mrs. Errington's antique blue and white china cups.

"Would it be Mr. Diamond——? But no; you know him by sight. Or—oh, I suppose it was that Methodist preacher, Powell!"

"Powell! Yes, that was the name—David Powell."

"Most likely. He is in and out at all hours. Really, Algernon, do you know—you remember the fellow, how he used to annoy us at Maxfield's. Well, do you know, I believe he is quite crazy!"

"You have always entertained that opinion, I believe, ma'am."

"Oh, but, my dear boy, I think he is demented in real downright earnest now. I do indeed. I'm sure the things that poor weak-minded Mrs. Thimbleby tells me about him——! He has delusions of all kinds; hears voices, sees visions. I should say it is a case of what your father would have called 'melancholy madness.' Really, Algy, I frequently think about it. It is quite alarming sometimes in the night if I happen to wake up, to remember that there is a lunatic sleeping overhead. You know he might take it into his head to murder one! Or if he only killed himself—which is perhaps more likely—it would still be a highly unpleasant circumstance. I could not possibly remain in the lodgings, you know. Out of the question! And so I told that silly Thimbleby. I said to her, 'Observe, Mrs. Thimbleby, if any dreadful thing happens in this house—a suicide, or anything of that sort—I shall leave you at an hour's notice. I wish you well, and I have no desire to withdraw my patronage from you, but you could not expect me to look over a coroner's inquest.'"

Algernon threw his head back and laughed heartily. "That was a fair warning, at any rate!" said he. "And if Mr. David Powell has any consideration for his landlady, he will profit by it—that is to say, supposing Mrs. Thimbleby tells him of it. What did she say?"

"Oh, she merely cried and whimpered, and hid her face in her apron. She is terribly weak-minded, poor creature."

Castalia had been listening in silence. All at once she said, "How many miserable people there are!"

"Very true, Cassy; provincial postmasters and others. And part of my miserable lot is to go down to the office again for an hour to-night."

"My poor boy!" "Go to the office again to-night!" exclaimed his mother and his wife simultaneously.

"Yes; it is now half-past eight. I have an appointment. At least—I shall be back in an hour, I have no doubt."

Algernon walked off with an air of good-humoured resignation, smiling and shrugging his shoulders. The two women, left alone together, took his departure very differently. Mrs. Errington was majestically wrathful with a system of things which involved so much discomfort to a scion of the house of Ancram. She was of opinion that some strong representations should be made to the ministry; that Parliament should be appealed to. And she rather enjoyed her own eloquence, and was led on by it to make some most astounding assertions, and utter some scathing condemnations with an air of comfortable self-satisfaction. Castalia, on the other hand, remained gloomily taciturn, huddled into an easy-chair by the hearth, and staring fixedly at the fire.

It has been recorded in these pages that Mrs. Errington did not much object to silence on the part of her companion for the time being; she only required an assenting or admiring interjection now and then, to enable her to carry on what she supposed to be a very agreeable conversation, but she did like her confidante to do that much towards social intercourse. And she liked, moreover, to see some look of pleasure, interest, or sympathy on the confidante's face. Looking at Castalia's moody and abstracted countenance, she could not but remember the gentle listener, in whom she had been wont for so many years to find a sweet response to all her utterances.

"Oddly enough," said she, "I had been disappointed of a visitor this evening, and so should have been quite alone if you and Algy had not come in. I had asked Rhoda to spend the evening with me."

Castalia looked round at the sound of that name. "Why didn't she come?" she asked, abruptly.

"Oh, I don't know. She merely said she could not leave home to-night. That old father of hers sometimes takes tyrannical fancies into his head. He has been kinder to dear Rhoda of late, and has treated her more becomingly—chiefly, I believe I may say, owing to my influence, although the old booby chose to quarrel with me—but when he takes a thing into his head, he is as obstinate as a mule."

"I don't know about treating her 'becomingly,' but I think she needs some one to look after her and keep her in check."

"Who, Rhoda? My dear Castalia, she is the very sweetest-tempered creature I ever met with in my life; and that is saying a good deal, let me tell you, for the Ancram temper was something quite special. A gift! I don't boast of it, because I believe it was simply constitutional. But such was the fact."

"The girl is dressed up beyond her station. The last time I saw her, it was absurd. Scarcely reputable, I should think."

Mrs. Errington by no means liked this attack. Over and above the fact that Rhoda was her pet, and her protégée, which would have sufficed to make any animadversions on her appear impertinent, she was genuinely fond of the girl, and answered with some warmth, "I am sure, Castalia, that whatever Rhoda Maxfield might be dressed in, she would look modest and sweet, not to say excessively pretty, for I suppose there cannot be a doubt about that?"

"I thought you were a stickler for people keeping to their own station, and not aping their betters!"

"We must distinguish, Castalia. Birth will ever be with me the first consideration. Coming of the race I do, it could not be otherwise. But it is useless to shut one's eyes to the fact that money nowadays will do much. Look at our best families!—families of lineage as good as my own. What do we see? We see them allying themselves with commercial people right and left. Now, there was Miss Pickleham. The way in which she was thrown at Algy's head would surprise you. She had a hundred thousand pounds of her own on the day she married, and expectations of much more on old Pickleham's decease. But I never encouraged the thing. Perhaps I was wrong. However!—she married Sir Peregrine Puffin last season. And the Puffins were in Cornwall before the Conquest."

Castalia shrugged her shoulders in undisguised scorn. "All that nonsense is nothing to the purpose," said she, throwing her head back against the cushion of the chair she sat on. Mrs. Errington opened her blue eyes to their widest extent. "Really, Castalia! 'All that nonsense!' You are not very polite."

"I'm sick of all the pretences, and shams, and deceptions," returned Castalia, her eyes glittering feverishly and her thin fingers twining themselves together with nervous restlessness. "I don't know whether you are made a fool of yourself, or are trying to make a fool of me——"

"Castalia!"

"But, in either case, I am not duped. Your 'sweet Rhoda!' Don't you know that she is an artful, false coquette—perhaps worse!

"Castalia!"

"Yes, worse. Why should she not be as bad as any other low-bred creature, who lures on gentlemen to make love to her? Men are such idiots! So false and fickle! But, though I may be injured and insulted, I will not be laughed at for a dupe."

"Good heavens, Castalia! What does this mean?"

"And I will tell you another thing, if you really are so blind to what goes on, and has been going on, for years: I don't believe Ancram has gone to the post-office to-night at all. I believe he has gone to see Rhoda. It would not be the first time he has deceived me on that score!"

Mrs. Errington sat holding the arms of her easy-chair with both hands, and staring at her daughter-in-law. The poor lady felt as if the world were turned upside down. It was not so long since old Maxfield had astonished her by plainly showing that he thought her of no importance, and choosing to turn her out of his house. And now, here was Castalia conducting herself in a still more amazing manner. Whilst she revolved the case in her brain—much confused and bewildered as that organ was—and endeavoured to come to some clear opinion on it, the younger woman got up and walked up and down the room with the restless, aimless, anxious gait of a caged animal.

At length Mrs. Errington slowly nodded her head two or three times, drew a long breath, folded her hands, and, assuming a judicial air, spoke as follows:

"My dear Castalia! I shall overlook the unbecomingness of certain expressions that you have used towards myself, because I can make allowance for an excited state of feeling. But you must permit me to give you a little advice. Endeavour to control yourself; try to look at things with calmness and judgment, and you will soon perceive how wrong and foolish your present conduct is. And, moreover, you need not be startled, if I have discovered the real motive at the bottom of all this display of temper. There never was a member of my family yet who had not a wonderful gift of reading motives. I'm sure it is nothing to envy us! I have often, for my own part, wished myself as slow of perception as other people, for the truth is not always pleasant. But I must say that I can see one thing very plainly—and that is, that you are most unfortunately and most unreasonably giving way to jealousy! I can see it, Castalia, as plain as possible."

Mrs. Errington had finished her harangue with much majesty, bringing out the closing sentences as if they were a most unexpected and powerful climax, when the effect of the whole was marred by her giving a violent start and exclaiming, with more naturalness than dignity, "Mercy on us, Castalia, what will you do next? Do shut that window, for pity's sake! I shall get my death of cold!"

Castalia had opened the window, and was leaning out of it, regardless of the sleet which fell in slanting lines and beat against her cheek. "I knew that was his step," she said, speaking, as it seemed, more to herself than to her mother-in-law. "And he has no umbrella, and those slight shoes on!" She ran to the fireplace and stirred the fire into a blaze, displaying an activity which was singularly contrasted with her usual languid slowness of movement. "Can't you give him some hot wine and water?" she asked, ringing the bell at the same time. When her husband came in she removed his damp great-coat with her own hands, made him sit down near the fire, and brought him a pair of his mother's slippers, which were quite sufficiently roomy to admit his slender feet. Algernon submitted to be thus cherished and taken care of, declaring, with an amused smile, as he sipped the hot negus, that this fuss was very kind, but entirely unnecessary, as he had not been three minutes in the rain.

As to Mrs. Errington, she was so perplexed by her daughter-in-law's sudden change of mood and manner, that she lost her presence of mind, and remained gazing from Algernon to his wife very blankly. "I never knew such a thing!" thought the good lady. "One moment she's raging and scolding, and abusing her husband for deceiving her, and the next she is petting him up as if he was a baby!"

When the fly was announced, and Castalia left the little drawing-room to put on her cloak and bonnet, Mrs. Errington drew near to her son and whispered to him solemnly, "Algy, there is something very strange about your wife. I never saw such a changed creature within the last few weeks. Don't you think you should have some one to see her?—some professional person I mean? I fear that her brain is affected!"

"Good gracious, mother! Another lunatic? You are getting to have a monomania on that subject yourself!" Algernon laughed as he said it.

"My dear, there may be two persons afflicted in the same way, may there not? But I said nothing about lunatics, Algy. Only—really, I think some temporary disturbance of the brain is going on. I do, indeed."

"Pooh, pooh! Nonsense, ma'am! But it is odd enough that you are the second person who has made that agreeable suggestion to me, within a fortnight. Poor Cassy! That's all she gets by her airs and her temper."

"Another person, was there?"

"Yes; it was little Miss Chubb, and——"

"Miss Chubb! Upon my word, I think that Miss Chubb was guilty of taking a considerable liberty in suggesting anything of the kind about the Honourable Mrs. Ancram Errington!"

"Oh, I don't know about liberty; but, of course, I laughed at her; and, of course, you will too, if she says anything of the kind to you."

"I shall undoubtedly check her pretty severely, if she attempts anything of the sort with me! Miss Chubb, indeed!"

The consequence was, that Mrs. Errington went about among her Whitford friends elaborately contradicting and denying "the innuendos spread abroad about her daughter-in-law by certain presumptuous and gossiping persons;" and thus brought the suggestion before many who would not otherwise have heard of it. All which, of course, surprised and annoyed Algernon very much, who had, naturally, not expected anything of the sort from his mother's well-known tact and discretion.

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HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXI. A SURPRISE.

I HAD seen my uncle more than once since the breaking up of the Raeburn household, the business connected with the fraud on the Insurance Company having necessitated his presence, as it had my own, at Kirkdale; but I had found him so distressed and annoyed by his involuntary connection with the attorney's misdeeds, and by the insult which had been put upon him, in making him play the part of catspaw, that I had scarcely opened my lips to him upon my own affairs. Now, however, I determined to do this at once; I desired that there should not be an hour's unnecessary delay in understanding my position, and asking his advice as to my future. I wished my stay at Stanbrook to be as short as possible, in case any plan should be devised between us for my setting to work in earnest to gain my own livelihood, and I was resolved that, while I did remain there, there should be no misunderstanding of my position as respected Gertrude. If matters were altogether hopeless, it would be cruel indeed in me, I argued, not to release her from her promise; if the hope to which I secretly clung was that she would cleave to me still, and prefer to wait long years for my unworthy self, even till youth had fled from her, I was ashamed of it, but I deceived myself all along. Selfish as I was, Heaven knows I loved her better than myself; and if I lost her, I knew that life would for me have nothing worth striving for.

In the interval of our separation Gertrude had almost entirely recovered her health, and when I arrived at the Rectory she was absent, having gone out with my aunt for a drive in the carriage. For this I was not sorry, as it enabled me to have, at once, that interview with my uncle, which I so greatly desired.

The rector welcomed me very heartily, yet did not look less worried than on the last occasion when I had seen him.

"Here is a precious lot of rubbish," cried he, pointing to a mass of documents with which the table was covered. "No sooner have I escaped from one legal cobweb than I get caught in another. What wrong have I ever done to my fellow-creatures, that any one of them should appoint me his trustee?"

"Indeed," said I, "uncle, I am very sorry to find you so bothered; and more particularly as I want to bother you myself. My aunt and Gertrude, I find, are out, and I wish to take the opportunity of their absence to have a talk with you upon my unfortunate affairs."

"Yes, I've made a pretty mess of them, Harry," observed my uncle, ruefully.

"I am sure you did it all for the best, sir," answered I, cheerfully.

"That is small comfort, my poor lad, when everything has happened for the worst," returned my uncle, gloomily. "But whoever would have thought that Mark Raeburn was a swindler and a thief? To rob his own flesh and blood—an unprotected girl—and his own ward! Only think of that! Gertrude has behaved like an angel about it, as one would have expected of her; nor from your lips, my lad, have I heard one word of complaint—and you might with justice have complained."

"My dear uncle," returned I, deeply affected by the rector's manner, "I hope I should never complain of you for any miscarriage of my affairs, even were you to blame. Nothing, however, could have been done, so far as I can see, to hinder this man from robbing us. The mischief was probably completed when I came upon those duplicates, so that, even if you had inquired at the Bank about the deeds—as Mr. Raeburn had the audacity to suggest—no real good would have come of it. We should only have discovered our losses earlier."

"Still, in that case, we might have saved something out of the fire; and it was my duty to have made the inquiry. I had, however, some excuse for my negligence, Harry, as this document will show," and he placed his hand upon a parchment roll that lay on the table.

"My dear uncle," answered I, warmly, "I do not wish you to excuse yourself. Whatever I have lost is far less than what I already owe to you ten times told. I am young and strong, and fit to make my own way in the world. It is not upon my own account that I feel this blow at all. It wrecks my happiness, because it has destroyed—I am afraid, utterly destroyed—the hopes I had entertained with respect to Gertrude. I want you to tell her from me—I thought that I could have told her myself, but I dare not—that all must needs be over between us; that though I love her so dearly——" I suppose I must have broken down here, since my uncle interposed with a "Don't fret, don't fret, lad. Sunshine will come out of this yet."

"No, no, uncle; it is idle to cling to such a hope, and it would be doing wrong to Gerty."

"If Alec had only known the poor girl's fortune had gone," mused the rector, once more touching the papers before him, "he would not have made such a will as this. It is he who has put me into this new hobble, by appointing me his executor. He left Gerty nothing, as he told us, because he concluded that she was already provided for. Else she would have been an heiress still."

"I would she were," said I, presently; "though, had it happened so, she would still have been as far out of my reach as now."

"Why so?" inquired my uncle, sharply. His tone and the sudden colour on his cheek reminded me that he himself, as a poor man, had married a woman with money, though, I am sure, not from mercenary considerations.

"Well," stammered I, "having wooed Gertrude on something like equal terms, I should not like to have held her to her bargain when she was rich, and I had not a penny."

"Ah, you think people of fortune should only wed people of fortune, do you?" observed the rector, drily; "that's a pity, since otherwise you and Gertrude might have made a match of it yet."

"How is that, sir?" inquired I, with eagerness. "Believe me, that if any good fortune has happened to—to Miss Floyd—I shall rejoice indeed."

"I am sure you would, my lad; but there is no such luck. Here is a copy of Alec Raeburn's will, with a number of dreadful documents in connection with it—the poor man had shares in everything, it seems—which I only received from town this morning. In default of relations, or rather by reason of the exclusion of them for the reasons with which we are acquainted, he has left the residue of his fortune, after deducting the sum sunk in the annuity, to his London agent."

"A very mistaken measure, in my opinion, uncle, and one that shows more pique than good principle," exclaimed I hotly, thinking how many buffets from poverty's hard hand even a little of this money might have saved my darling.

"De mortuis, Harry," observed my uncle, gravely.

"Nay, sir, I speak no ill of him," returned I. "For my own part, I have none but kindly recollections of the poor old man; indeed, he left me a legacy as it is," and I pointed to Chico, whom I had brought with me in his cage, and who had been listening to our conversation with his head on one side and a preternaturally sagacious twinkle in his eye.

"He left you something more, Harry—— Sit down now, and don't be excited while I read to you a little extract that concerns yourself. When I said that Alec Raeburn had bequeathed the residue of his fortune—twenty thousand pounds it is, not a penny less—to his London agent, I should have added that it was 'in trust to Harry Sheddon.'"

"You are joking, sir," gasped I. "He cannot have left it to me?"

"'Pon my life he has though, if I can

read English, Harry. These are his words: 'I do not leave this money to Gertrude Floyd,' says he, 'as it would behove me to do, since, in that case, my brother Mark may come to inherit it, which I do not desire; but to Harry Sheddon, on condition that he shall marry the said Gertrude Floyd.'"

I felt thunderstruck, and for a moment or two could find no voice to speak.

"Cheer up! cheer up, you lubber!" cried the parrot, suddenly. "Damme, cheer up!"

Removed from the depressing atmosphere of brother Alec's room, Chico had recovered his marine vocabulary.

The rector leant back in his chair and roared with laughter. "If you should not be rich enough to afford to keep that bird, my lad, I will keep it for you. You may still be a poor man if you please. The terms of the will require that you should marry Gertrude, and if your late objections to inequality of fortune are absolutely insurmountable——"

"Nay, sir, since I am only to take the fortune, conditionally upon my sharing it with Gertrude, it is, in fact, divided between us," urged I, laughingly.

"I thought you would contrive to reconcile yourself to a little sacrifice of principle," said my uncle. "I could have told you of this good luck weeks ago, Harry, but I could not resist putting you to the test of adversity, which, I must say, you have stood in a way that does you honour. This will was made when I went up with poor Alec to town, and, until his death, I promised to keep its provisions secret. It was the knowledge of them, however, which made me more delicate than I otherwise might have been with respect to Mark Raeburn. Since his brother had left so much money away from his family to my nephew, I did not like to show a want of confidence in the attorney's management of my own affairs. That was the excuse I spoke of, for my not inquiring about those documents at the Bank."

"You will at least permit me then," urged I, "to refund to you what you have lost, uncle, through delicacy upon my account——"

"Chut, chut," interrupted the rector; "what is gone was yours, lad, for it was all intended for you, which comes to the same thing. There is no refunding, nor business of any kind, thank goodness, to be transacted further. The London agent and I are your trustees, and all we have to do is to see that the conditions of the will are carried into effect, and that as soon as possible. Yes, sir," continued my uncle, assuming an air of severity, "you will have to marry this young woman before the year's out."

CHAPTER XXXII. THE LAST MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

My uncle had not been so reticent to Gertrude as he had been to me. He had not had the heart to conceal from her the good fortune that was in store for me, and, therefore, for herself. In her delicate state of health, and in the distress of mind from which she was suffering, it would indeed have been a cruelty to withhold any materials for comfort, and they had been to her bodily health as a tonic, and to her wounded spirit as a balm.

I never saw her looking better or more beautiful, though I had seen her look more bright, than when I clasped her in my arms that afternoon at Stanbrook; and even the brightness came back to her in time. After all, no one else had suffered from the depravity of the attorney except ourselves and the Assurance Company, whose two quarterly payments, extorted by his fraud, it was my first care to make good out of brother Alec's legacy. None of our neighbours had lost a penny by the Raeburns, and everyone was full of respectful sympathy upon Gertrude's account. Not a word of bitterness ever escaped her lips in connection with the loss of her fortune. "Think as charitably as you can of us, Gerty," had been the attorney's last words to her, after he had confessed the wrong he had done her; and she did not neglect his injunctions. As for Mrs. Raeburn—of whose iniquity she never knew for years—she would sometimes speak of her with a tenderness that roused my secret indignation. When the sale, necessitated by the attorney's debts, took place at the Priory, she even expressed a wish to obtain some memento of her late hostess, and I had, therefore, purchased for her the escritoire, at which that lady had been wont to sit when supervising her weekly accounts.

I did not conceive that the terms of Alec Raeburn's will, though they ran "within the year," by any means precluded my marriage with Gertrude within the month; and I should have liked it to take place with even more than that despatch if the matter had rested with myself alone, but my darling's sorrow for the misfortunes and the crimes of her cousins was not only severe but lasting, while the shock of Mrs. Raeburn's sudden death affected her so seriously, that I made up my mind that she should never know how it had really happened. Thus the summer had reached its fulness ere my happiness was permitted to culminate in our union, which, it was arranged, should not separate us from the old home. My aunt's affection for Gertrude had grown to be very great—much greater, indeed, I must confess, than it had ever been for me. Gerty would carry Nelly in her arms—while I had never been permitted so responsible a charge—and did, out of love, a thousand little things to please her hostess which no hired "companion" would have done for her, or, at least, not half so graciously. "You will kill me, you wicked boy," said Aunt Eleanor, "if you carry that dear girl away from Stanbrook." In fact, it was not without difficulty and much indignant remonstrance that we contrived to get away from the Rectory, even for our honeymoon. I used the opportunity of the temporary enfranchisement to take my darling abroad, and the thorough change of scene she thus experienced was of the greatest value to her, in effacing her sad recollections of the Priory and its inmates. On this account we prolonged our absence, and were only hurried back at last by a half-illegible note from Mrs. Hastings, whose handwriting was generally the pink of perfection, adjuring us to return to the Rectory forthwith if we wished to see her husband alive. Then my heart reproached me for having played the truant, though, indeed, I had not done so from selfish motives, and poor Gerty was so distressed, that half the benefit which her holiday had wrought in her seemed to have disappeared at the ill news. Throughout our journey home, our talk was almost exclusively of kind Uncle Ralph, and of the blow that threatened us, or, even at that moment, might have already fallen. We had telegraphed the hour of our arrival at Kirkdale, and at the station found the carriage waiting to carry us to the Rectory. But, alas! the footman, who met us on the platform, was in mourning, and I perceived that we had reached home too late.

"He is gone, then?" whispered I to the man.

"Oh, yes, sir; and now that it is so, even missus herself, I think, feels it a happy release."

"Good heavens! Then did he suffer so much?"

"Well, sir, just as you have always known him, only wusser—a wheezing and a waddlin——"

"It must be the dog!" cried Gertrude, almost in hysterics, not from laughter, but from the revulsion from wretchedness to relief that she thus suddenly experienced.

"Oh, yes, miss—I mean, marm—it were the poor doag. He be buried in the corner of the croquet-ground, underneath the cypress-tree, and a mossylion is to be put over it."

Upon once more reperusing Aunt Eleanor's scrawl, we perceived that she had not mentioned her husband by name, though, of course, we had never doubted that the phrase, "If you wish to see my darling alive," had reference to him, and him alone. At first my wife and I were very indignant, believing that this dubiety of expression had been intentional—that it was a pious fraud, on Aunt Eleanor's part, to have us home. But when we saw her, it was plain that she had written out of the fulness of her heart.

"Your uncle? Not a bit of it," whimpered she, contemptuously, upon our telling her of our mistake. "When he comes to lose me, I trust he will show more feeling than he did for my poor darling."

For six months the household wore the garb of woe for the deceased; after which, to my great content, my aunt's affections transferred themselves to Chico, in consequence of some sympathetic observation he had uttered à propos de bottes, but supposed by her to have reference to her departed favourite. Nevertheless, she would often interrupt her game at croquet—and more especially when she was on the losing side—to visit the mausoleum, and drop the silent tear on Nelly's remains.

Afterwards there were worse losses with us, that have left a void in our hearts up to this day. My wife and I live alone now—for Heaven has not vouchsafed us children, and the memory of dear Uncle Ralph and his wife has been, for many a year, all that has remained of them—but we are still in the old house, the present rector preferring to receive rent for it and reside elsewhere. I have been an idle man all my life, except that for some years I devoted myself, with no very marked success, to poetic composition; yet I am by no means an unhappy one. If the general public did not appreciate my muse as she deserved, my wife's admiration made up for their indifference, and I now repose upon my laurels. Stanbrook is not so much "out of the world" as it used to be, yet enough so to retain its quiet attractions. Our most frequent visitor is Mr. Wilde, who, having given up practice, often occupies our spare room to the satisfaction of us all. Sometimes, though rarely, we discourse to him of those events which, happening when we were little more than boy and girl, seem to have exhausted, as it were, at its commencement all the romance life had in store for us; at others, we converse of those who lived beneath our roof before us, and whose love for us has hallowed it. From my study window I can see the churchyard where the good old rector lies beside his Eleanor; and where, not far removed from them, lie the remains of brother Alec, which my uncle caused to be brought thither from Sandibeach. There is another grave, too, beside Nelly's splendid "mossylion," in our garden. Beneath a rose-tree, on which he was once wont to climb and cling in the summer time, lies poor Chico. He was very old before he died. His scarlet plumage faded like a veteran's coat, his tongue ran on, especially at night, with all the garrulity of age. Though grown very infirm and sick, however, he would at last only shake his head despondingly, as though there were no hope, in answer to inquiries as to the state of his health; so that when he did really die, which happened out of doors in the July sunshine, the finding of his voice again quite electrified us. "Dead, dead!" cried he; "think of that!" and fell lifeless from his perch into my wife's arms.

There is one circumstance which I must not forget to narrate to my readers (it was many a year after its occurrence before I dared to tell it to my wife), since it explains a certain accident, which might have been a catastrophe, that has been left unsolved throughout these pages. I have said that a certain escritoire belonging to Mrs. Raeburn had passed into our possession. It had been placed in my aunt's boudoir, and Gerty used to write her letters upon it. She one day complained to me that, though it stood evenly enough upon its legs, it would occasionally rattle when pushed, as though some hinge or other metallic part of it was out of order. I accordingly entered upon an investigation of the interior, when the following discovery took place: my aunt was in the room at the time, engaged at her own desk, but Gertrude, most fortunately, was occupied elsewhere about the house, of which the whole management had been long deputed to her. Not being able to find the cause of the rattling, I took out all the drawers of the escritoire and then turned it right over, whereupon something fell out with a jingle.

"What is it?" inquired my aunt, looking up with some curiosity from her letters. "What on earth is it?" she repeated, since I did not reply.

"Not much," said I; "only this, which must have got lodged behind some of the woodwork."

And I held a penny between my finger and thumb.

"Ah, you may depend upon it that woman had put that by against a rainy day," observed my aunt, contemptuously. "I should not have been astonished had you found a farthing done up in cotton wool. It makes me quite in a passion to hear Gertrude speak so respectfully of the old miser."

"Mrs. Raeburn was never a favourite of yours, Aunt Eleanor, was she?" returned I, gravely.

"A favourite? No, indeed! I had the worst possible opinion of her. Nothing that you could possibly tell me of her would surprise me. My only wonder was that she died in her bed."

And yet I could have surprised my aunt, at that very moment, by telling her what I had really found in Mrs. Raeburn's desk. It was not a penny, but the key belonging to the chain of the skiff, which had been missing ever since that adventure on the lake which had so nearly proved fatal. I knew at once that it was Mrs. Raeburn who, while Gertrude left her in the boathouse, had removed the plugs out of the punt, and had afterwards stolen this key, so that the skiff could not be used. Why she had retained it in that secret place, instead of throwing it into the lake, I could not guess. At all events, the imprudence, as it turned out, had done her no harm. I could not think worse of her than I already did. She had tried to murder Gertrude twice instead of once, that was all; in the first instance, to be sure it chanced that I also was included in the design, but that was a mere incidental circumstance, which I have no doubt she would have avoided if she could, and which she perhaps regretted. I put the key in one of my uncle's cup-boards, where in due time it was found, to the great bewilderment of the household. The rector protested he had searched for it in that very place himself half-a-dozen times, a statement received with scornful incredulity by Aunt Eleanor.

"It was fortunate, at all events, you must allow, my dear," said she, "that you didn't horsewhip that pedlar."

The key is in use; but a little machine of steel, which my readers would recognise, lies unused and rusted in that tin box, labelled "Mr. Hastings's securities," which once ornamented the attorney's office shelves. I keep it as a memento of the narrow escape which my unconscious darling had from the jaws of death, and never look upon it without thanking Heaven for her deliverance. She has been the best and truest wife to me that ever man had. At first, like all other young couples, we had our little tiffs, but the faithful Chico's advice—always most freely offered—of "Kiss and be friends," was always welcomed. Now we are grown far too wise, and alas! too old, for even those lovers' quarrels.

SERVIA.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

IN TWO PARTS. PART TWO.

The founder of the reigning dynasty of Servia, Milosch Obrenovitsch the First, bore originally the name of Teodorovitch, being that of his father, who was a simple herdsman, or swineherd, as was Milosch himself in his young days. But Wichjna, his mother, had espoused as her first husband one Obren, a man fairly rich, and of a certain position in his district. To Milan Obrenovitsch, her son by this first marriage, Milosch (whose father, Teodorovitch, died early) was indebted for considerable assistance in "starting in life," materially and politically, and eventually he assumed the name of his half-brother and benefactor; as did likewise his younger brothers (sons of Teodorovitch) Ivan and Jefrem. Milosch himself was born in 1780 at the village of Dobrigna (district of Oujitsa).

"Down to 1804 Milosch had led a life which was of the hardest (avait vécu dans la plus grande misère)," says of him his own son, Prince Michael (who reigned, as we shall see, from 1860 to 1868). "As herdsman he used many a time to conduct, for large cattle dealers, troops of oxen to the market at Zara, in Dalmatia. Later he entered the service of his brother Milan." *

On the outbreak of the War of Independence, Milan, who had not much taste for soldiering, nominated Milosch for such rank in the national army, as he was himself entitled to by his position of Voyvode. Milosch soon gave proofs both of daring courage and military dexterity. He took part, under Kara George, in the siege of Oujitsa (1807), where he received severe wounds. The Skouptschina, convoked at Belgrade in 1810, having nominated Milan Obrenovitsch a commissioner to the Russian head-quarters at Bucharest, it was again Milosch who fulfilled the mission of his brother. About this time he assumed the name of Obrenovitsch (son of Obren). His abilities acquired for him every day more consideration, but nothing could have aided his rise so much as the events of 1813 and the flight of Kara George. The way in which Milosch contrived "out of the nettle danger to pluck the flower safety," and advancement as well, is truly remarkable.

When the army of Kara George dispersed, and so many Voyvodes also escaped over the Save into Austria, Milosch Obrenovitsch alone continued on his country's side of the river. As he rode along its bank a brother Servian chief recrossed, and urged him to seek safety also in flight. "What will my life profit me in Austria?" Milosch answered. "No! Whatever may be the fate of my fellow-countrymen shall be mine also!"

He forthwith hastened to his home to watch events, without intention of open defiance of the Turks.

What he, perhaps, had anticipated, came to pass. Kurschid Pasha, desiring at first to conciliate the Servians, sent to Milosch, now one of the few prominent chiefs remaining in the country, offering him pardon and to make him knes, or chief, of a district (Roudnik), if he would assist in pacifying the minds of men. Milosch, with the genius of a politician, divined in the offer safety in the present for Servia's existence, and hope for its future. He agreed with Ali-Aga, Kurschid's lieutenant, to submit himself. Offering his arms in token thereof, Ali accepted only the sabre, returning to Milosch his pistols, musket, and dagger. Some time

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* See the curious and modestly-written brochure of Prince Michael, defending his father against certain attacks (published at Paris in 1850).

afterwards Soliman Pasha (transferred from Bosnia to the reconquered pashalik of Servia), conferred on Milosch further promotion and marks of honour.

"Look, my people," said Soliman, when, receiving Milosch at Belgrade in grand audience, he presented his old opponent to his court: "This is one whom I in future regard as my son. He is now quiet and modest; yet more than once have I been obliged to betake myself to flight before him; at length, at Rawani, he wounded me in the arm. There, my adopted son," he added, extending to Milosch his scarred right hand, "it is there that thou hast bitten me."

"This hand I will now also gild," said Milosch, with that supple address and courtesy which is common to oriental diplomacy. The pasha finished by presenting the Servian chief with a pair of pistols and an Arab steed, and appointed him grand-knes of two other districts besides Roudnik.

Milosch was now regarded, alike by Turks and Servians, as the most prominent man in the country. Biding his time, and undismayed by the darkness of the hour, he nourished secretly his designs of redeeming Servia's fortunes, and of raising himself to be its head. Though his difficulties of policy were extreme, he contrived to disseminate among his compatriots the assurance of his real devotion to their cause.

Cruelty followed cruelty during two years on the part of the Turks; at Belgrade, for instance, thirty-six Servian patriots (5th December, 1814) were impaled on the glacis of the citadel. Milosch had enforced Turkish authority, by repressing one or two petty risings, which he felt were not of magnitude to justify hopes of success. But he determined, in the beginning of 1815, that it was time for a serious effort. Indeed, it was partly in desperation, as well as induced by policy, that he arrived at this resolve. Had his own astuteness not inspired him, he received, about this time, a curious warning from some careless Turks, which would have sufficed to make him misdoubt his own safety for long. As he rode into Belgrade one day, a body of the pasha's soldiers were bringing in the head of an old Voyvode, well known to Milosch, who had just been decapitated by Soliman's orders. "See'st thou the head, knes?" cried one; "it will be thy turn next!"

Milosch passed off the remark; he perceived, however, in effect, that the pasha was anxious to retain him at Belgrade; his fate was, doubtless, being prepared. But the wily Servian was equal to dealing with the emergency. Soon after making his peace with Soliman, in 1813, he had purchased of the pasha some sixty slaves, the agreed sum to be paid for whom (more than one hundred piastres) he still owed. "I am thinking of discharging what I owe you, pasha," he now said. "To do so, it will be necessary for me to raise money by selling a large number of cattle and swine. I must see to it myself, as none can do it so well for me." In short, he effected his departure, for the cupidity of the pasha prevailed over his cruelty, and, leaving Belgrade, Milosch was soon safe at home in his mountains at Roudnik.

The revolt, or rather second War of Independence, now commenced. In the struggle, which lasted for about two years, Milosch many times signalised himself by acts of desperate valour, whilst he often had hairbreadth escapes from destruction. When the Turks attacked Passarowitz in 1816, the Servians, outnumbered, recoiled, and were on the point of flight. All seemed over, when Milosch rushed into the midst of the fugitives, crying out, "Where are you going, wretches? Must your women cover you with their aprons? There lies our only stronghold; we have no other! All is lost if you recoil now!" and with these spirited words he led them back to the charge.

Milosch's reference to the women was not inapt. His own wife, the heroic Lioubitza, was, more than once, to be seen in the thick of the fighting; and there were not wanting others of her sex who followed her example.

In one battle, Milosch, after defeating a force of the enemy, succeeded in capturing the Turkish commander, who was no other than his old acquaintance Ali. The politic Servian chief only availed himself of his success to speedily release his prisoner, sending him back to his master in oriental fashion, loaded with presents. This led to negotiations, and Milosch himself proceeded to Kurschid Pasha's camp. Terms, however, could not on this occasion be agreed upon, Milosch standing out for conditions which were to place his country upon the footing of a semi-independent state.

When the Servian chief rose to mount his horse to depart, the pasha's guards, with a treachery for which Milosch seems this time not to have been prepared, rushed upon him with their swords. Fortunately, however, Ali, who had been so generously treated by him, promptly interposed, representing that Milosch had come upon the footing of a safe-conduct.

Some desultory fighting continued after this, but at length the Porte, wearied out by the indomitable Milosch, whose bribes, perhaps, also had their influence, consented to definite bases of negotiation, and peace was concluded on terms which, though they endowed Servia with less independence than she had for a short time experienced under her unfortunate exiled hero Kara George, contained the fruitful germs by which it was to grow up into its present state. Belgrade and the other fortresses were to have Turkish garrisons, but the Servians were granted by firman the administration of their country, and though paying a tribute they alone taxed themselves, whilst Milosch was recognised as de facto ruler of Servia. On the 16th November, 1817, the politic hero was elected by the assembled chiefs and superior clergy of the nation Hereditary Prince of Servia.

Several authorities on Servian history allege that a dark stain rests on Milosch, in connection with the capture and death, by Turkish hands, in July, 1817, of Kara George. That terror of the Osmanli had returned suddenly from Russia, with what projects have never exactly been determined. Perhaps he was moved by pure patriotism; possibly he was envious of the rise of Milosch. It has even been said that he came merely to dig up a buried treasure; but that seems little likely to have been his prime motive. At all events he returned suddenly, and in disguise, to meet his fate.

Enemies of Prince Milosch Obrenovitsch the First have gone so far as to hint that he deliberately betrayed his old commander to the Turks, whilst some writers say that he abstained from sending him the warning which might have saved him; and others affirm, let us hope truly, that Milosch was entirely innocent of any part, active or passive, in the fate of Kara George. If there were, indeed, truth in the sinister suspicion, a terrible vengeance has been taken for the deed within the last ten years. To a conspiracy organised by Prince Alexander Karageorgewitch (son of "Black George") was traced, as we shall see, the assassination, in 1868, of the excellent Prince Michael, the son and successor of Milosch.

The exact mode of the death of the once glorious Servian hero has not been quite clearly handed down to us. Whether he was publicly beheaded, or whether he was murdered as he slept in hiding, seems uncertain. The former report gave occasion to a short poem, in which the late Rev. Dr. Croly commemorated the melancholy end of Servia's first Liberator. We may extract a few lines of this forgotten but spirited poem:

'Twas noon! a blood-red banner played
Above thy rampart porte, Belgrade.
All tongues are silent in the group,
Who round that fearful stranger troop.
A peasant's robe is o'er him flung,
A swordless sheath beside him hung.
He sits a charger—but a slave
Now holds the bridle of the brave;
An Ethiop headsman, low'ring near,
Shows where must close his stern career.

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A trumpet rang, the turban'd line
Clashed up their spears, the headsman's sign;
Then, like the iron in the forge,
Blazed thy dark visage, Czerny George!
He knew that trumpet's Turkish wail,
His guide through many a forest vale;
When, scattering like the hunted deer,
The Moslem felt his early spear.
That day his courser to the knee
Was bathed in blood, and Servia free!

"If Kara George had not fled in 1813," avows with great frankness Prince Michael Obrenovitsch (in recounting his father's career), "his glory would be without spot, shining in the annals of Servia like the sun in a cloudless sky."

With the year 1817 the more stirring annals of Servia close. From the time of his accession, Milosch Obrenovitsch the First studied to preserve and develop his state. His career as a warrior had ceased. During the Greek War of Independence he held Servia aloof from hostilities with the Turks. A plot, by a number of Greek conspirators and some Servians, to assassinate him on account of his antipathy to aiding the cause of Greece, was, indeed, discovered in 1826. The culprits were executed at the capital of Servia.

With consummate dexterity, Milosch, though he avoided war, succeeded from time to time in enlarging both Servia's freedom and his own power as prince over her; but, though not devoid of interest, it is not within our scope to relate the history of Milosch's statecraft.

The sometime swineherd and patriot warrior was considered by distinguished visitors to have all the abilities of a profound statesman. When perceiving the extent of his knowledge, and the justice of his views on the affairs of Europe, they could hardly believe that the Prince of Servia had indeed never learned to read or write. Yet so it was; and the travels, moreover, of the son of the poor Teodorovitch had never extended out of Servia farther than to Zara, in Dalmatia, in youth with his cattle. He had never been, according to a naïve Servian phrase, in "a baptised and well-governed country." How was it?

Very soon after his accession, Milosch betook himself to study with ardour; though he was too old a man to learn reading and writing, he had books read to him by the dozen—books of history, geography, and treatises on political economy; and, last of all, he caused the best newspapers of Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg to be translated, and their information conveyed to him every morning. His memory was prodigious, and he soon acquired an exact idea of Europe.

We are now coming down to recent times, and must trace our course more rapidly. Servia's modern annals embrace dissensions and changes of dynasty, even as is common in the stories of older realms. The first of the Obrenovitsches was to taste of exile, yet regain his throne in extreme old age. In 1839, the Servians could no longer bear with the despotic exactions of their prince. A popular commotion in Belgrade forced Milosch, after a slight attempt at resistance, in which but little blood was shed, to abdicate; and his eldest son, Milan, was proclaimed prince by the style of Milan Obrenovitsch the Second (in Servia, it is to be observed, the numerical addition of each successive prince is made to the family, not the Christian-name; hence the present reigning prince is styled officially Milan Obrenovitsch the Fourth, not, as according to English ideas he would be, Milan the Second). This young prince was at the time in a declining state of health: it is said he was never, as a fact, informed of his father's deposition and his own official accession. Dying, in effect, the next month, his younger brother, Michael, the only other son of Milosch, became prince. With him, however, the Servians were at that time not long content, and in 1842 he retired to his father in Austria, when the Servians called to the throne Prince Alexander Kara Georgewitch, the son of "Black George."

The rule of Alexander for a time was popular, and the country made considerable advances in internal improvements under his direction. His weakness in national policy, his subserviency to Austria, and the favours he lavished on his wife's relatives, gradually destroyed this popularity, and in December, 1858, the Skouptchina compelled him to abdicate, and recalled Prince Milosch. It was a great triumph for the old prince, who, in his seventy-ninth year, once again entered Belgrade as chosen head of Servia. In one or two diplomatic transactions with the Porte, Milosch was yet able to show that he had not lost all the mental vigour of his youth; but the old man was fast decaying. In December, 1860, the first of the Obrenovitsches breathed his last.

Prince Michael's accession was immediately proclaimed, to the general satisfaction of the Servians. In him, for the first time, the state had a ruler of large experience and culture, acquired during his sojournings in exile in various parts of Western Europe—in Paris, Berlin, and London. Vast progress was made in internal improvements under Prince Michael, and in 1867, by able negotiation with Constantinople, the withdrawal of the Turkish garrisons from the three or four fortresses still occupied by them was obtained. Servia was freed from the least outward semblance of Turkish domination. The work of Milosch was complete.

A terrible crime deprived Servia, in the ensuing year, of this excellent ruler. On the 10th of June, 1868, as he was walking in his favourite recreation-ground, the Deer Park of Topchi-Dere, near Belgrade, accompanied by several ladies, his relatives, but attended only by one aide-de-camp and a valet-de-chambre, three men, who had bowed to the prince as he passed, and whose salutation he had returned, suddenly shot him in the back. The attendant fled; the aide-de-camp, who rushed to his prince's assistance, received such wounds as disabled him. The miscreants, who had other accomplices at hand, finished the life of the unfortunate prince by repeated blows, in the most barbarous manner, with their poniards and sabres.

The origin of this terrible deed was traced, as we have already incidentally had occasion to mention, to the son of Kara George.

Whether, indeed, Prince Alexander Kara Georgewitch, exiled in Hungary, incited the assassins to the actual slaying of Prince Michael was hardly proved, but the depositions taken by the tribunals at

Belgrade substantiated the fact that machinations to effect the overthrow of the Obrenovitsch dynasty, and his own reinstatement, were organised and sustained by him.

Prince Michael, leaving no children, was succeeded by the only remaining Obrenovitsch. This was a young lad of fourteen, who, promptly returning from his studies at Paris, was proclaimed with saddened enthusiasm as Milan Obrenovitsch the Fourth, and who is the actual reigning prince.*

Such is, in brief, the tale of Servian history down to the present time. Whether, according to the dreams of both Kara George and Milosch, Servia is yet to regain the full extent of her ancient limits, gathering into her fold all Slavonian Turkey, and becoming one of the chief of "the sick man's" inheritors, time alone can show. We can but quote the words of a traveller who visited this interesting, but even yet little-known, country some ten years ago:—

"No one can know much of the people who inhabit the southern bank of the Danube, without seeing in them all the elements which make up national greatness. No one can travel through the countries inhabited by the Servians without respect and admiration for a people whose virtues have not been destroyed by four centuries of oppression, and without an assurance that for such a race a splendid future is in store."

THE EXTRAVAGANCIES OF MONSIEUR OUFLE.

Monsieur Oufle, a well-to-do gentleman, supposed to have "flourished" about the beginning of the last century, was the proprietor of a considerable estate in lands, houses, rents, and ready money, somewhere in France. Of what particular city or town he was a denizen, the relator of his escapades declines to say, on the ground that to enlighten the reader upon that point would add neither to his amusement or instruction. Having no special claim upon his money or his time, M. Oufle spent a great deal of the first in forming a collection of works upon magic, diablerie, and kindred subjects, and devoted the greater portion of the second to mastering their contents, in the hope some day of finding an opportunity of putting his hardly-acquired knowledge to practical use.

As great men usually do, M. Oufle made his own opportunity. His craze did not conduce to his comfort, since his better-half delighted in ridiculing the Black Art and all its belongings. Madame was a lady of rigid virtue, upon whom Nature had bestowed "an external figure" that secured her against being tempted to forget her marital allegiance. Nevertheless, her husband, at a loss otherwise to understand her obstinate antipathy to his hobbies, took it into his head that there was a gentleman in the case; but who that gentleman might be, he had not the faintest notion. After much poring over his beloved black-letter tomes, M. Oufle thought he saw a way—indeed, several ways—by which to solve the mystery, and lost no time in setting to work. Procuring a frog's head and a pig's heart, he dried and pulverised them, and powdered Madame with the mixture as she slept, in the expectation that she would then and there give words to her secret thoughts; but, discreet even in slumber, the lady spake never a word, and M. Oufle arose in the morning just as wise as when he went to bed. The next night it was the same, and the next, and the next. Whether he placed a "diamant" on his spouse's head, a frog's tongue on her heart, a toad's heart on her left breast, or a blackbird's beneath her pillow, it was all one; the only sounds meeting the anxious listener's ears were certain nasal ones, beyond his powers of interpretation. Although not a little mortified by these successive failures, M. Oufle's faith remained unshaken. Consulting his books again, he read: "To find out which of three or four persons loves us best, we are to take three or four heads of thistles, cut off their points, give each thistle the name of one of these persons, and lay them under our pillow. That thistle which stands for the person loving us most will put forth a fresh sprout." These instructions the jealous man carried out to the letter, applying his wife's name to one thistle, and making the others represent ladies of his acquaintance. Unfortunately, Madame Oufle happened to take up the book he had consulted, and glancing over the page at which it stood open, lighted upon the thistle-test. Having seen some thistle-heads in Monsieur's hands, she grew jealous in her turn, and looking behind his pillow, had her suspicions confirmed. When M. Oufle examined his thistles, he found one of them had put forth a splendid prickly head; but, alas! instead of the name he hoped to read, he saw that of Beelzebub. The idea that he was best loved by the Prince of Darkness rather took him aback, and he half repented his curiosity; but after profound cogitation, concluded that there was a mistake somewhere, and that it would be well to repeat the experiment. This he did, and Madame took care that her thistle-head was the one to renew its sharpest crown. Still she had only scotched the snake. Taking an after-dinner turn round the garden, the sight of a bed of heliotropes reminded M. Oufle that one of those flowers, gathered in August, when the sun was in Leo, and wrapped up with a wolf's tooth in a laurel leaf, would, if placed inside a church, prevent any unfaithful wife there present from leaving the church until the charm was removed. It was August, the sun was in Leo, there were the heliotropes, and he knew where to get a wolf's tooth. That very night he made up the magic packet. The next day he hid it in a dark corner in the church, and, leaving Madame at her devotions there, slipped outside to wait the event. By-and-by the congregation, his wife included, came out. One young lady, however, he could see remained in the church when everyone else had gone. Monsieur hurried in to secure his heliotrope packet, and as he came out, the damsel followed. The charm had evidently been too much for her, and he was curious to know who the pretty sinner could be. He dogged her home, and was disgusted to find she was an unmarried lady, scarce out of her teens, who had made up her mind to take the veil.

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* Prince Milan was born at Jassy in 1854, and is the grandson of Ephraim (Jefrem), younger brother of Milosch the First.

Something, however, had been achieved: he was at ease regarding his wife, and sought to make amends for the suspicions he had never dared to breathe, by behaving more like a lover than a husband; but Madame Oufle rather resented this newly-born affection, and was proof against the voice of the charmer, though he charmed so wisely with the aid of quails' hearts, wolf-marrow, and hart's-horn. Then Madame's brother interfered, brought about mutual explanations, and persuaded his sister to forgive her husband's doubts, and forget her own. No sooner was the reconciliation effected, than our hero discovered that he had been born on the fifteenth day of the moon, and that "children born on that day naturally love women." Thereupon he became violently in love without knowing with whom, save that it was not with his wife. After a little while of odd uncertainty, Monsieur fixed upon his wife's friend, a young, handsome widow, but discreet withal, who heard his declaration with amused astonishment, before telling him she could not think of him. Oufle was not at all put out by the repulse, because he could make her love him in spite of herself, any man being able to overcome feminine obduracy by going a wooing with a kite's head on his stomach and vervain juice on his hands, if he could induce the lady occasionally to take a sniff at a box filled with a pomatum of wolf-marrow, ambergris, and cyprus-powder. The widow took Madame Oufle into her confidence, and, with her leave, fooled poor Oufle to the top of his bent, until, growing alarmed with the progress he was making, he transferred his attentions to a charming young creature. The change proved an expensive one, for every step in the good graces of the innocent maiden had to be bought with a present, and when, in hope of expediting matters, the would-be rake administered a love philtre, the lady almost died of it, whereupon he retired from the field, thinking he had done enough in the way of philandering, even for a man born on the fifteenth day of the moon.

One day M. Oufle received a very large sum of money. The bulk of the treasure he secured in an iron chest, but a bag containing a thousand louis d'or he locked up in his escritoire. His youngest daughter Rozine, holding that what belonged to the parent belonged to the child, resolved to appropriate the gold to her own needs, and opened her mind to her father's valet, Mornand, who readily agreed to share the risk and the plunder. To steal the money was easy enough; the difficulty lay in doing it in such a way that no fuss might be made about its disappearance. M. Oufle himself gave the plotters their cue by quarrelling with his brother-in-law because he would not allow that the spirits of the dead were in the habit of coming back to earth to annoy and rob the living, but insisted that those of the other world had something else to do than to leap about and cut capers, turn people's furniture topsy-turvy, slap folks in the face, knock against the walls, and put out the candles. That the spirits did all these things was soon demonstrated to M. Oufle's satisfaction, although they only played their pranks in his sanctum, which he rather took as a compliment; particularly when, heedless of his presence, the invisible merrymakers set tables dancing and chairs pirouetting before his eyes. Having accustomed the old gentleman to these spiritual visitations, the pair of plotters thought they might safely pay themselves for their pains, and returning from a long stroll, M. Oufle, upon entering his closet, found the furniture in the oddest places and positions, the windows all wide open, the floor strewn with sheets of paper covered with cabalistic signs, and his bag of louis d'or gone. Had he supposed his cash had been carried off by mortal thieves, there would have been uproar enough; as it was, he merely told his valet how the spirits had served him, and acquiesced in that worthy's advice to say nothing about the matter.

Having profited by her sire's madness, it was only a just retribution that Mdlle. Rozine, when she found a lover to her mind, should find this madness stand in the way of her getting married. Her father had no objection to the gentleman, one M. Belor, only an astrologer had instructed him that it was decreed his eldest daughter should become a duchess, and his younger one a nun; and he dared not run counter to the ruling of the planets, and, therefore, refused his consent to the match. The lovers consulted Mornand, and, after much deliberation, the latter proposed that M. Belor should copy out a book he had written against astrology, and address it to M. Oufle, with a letter from his genius, declaring that rather than be any longer the laughing-stock of the genii of the astrologer who duped Monsieur, he would become his enemy instead of protector, and destroy his health, distract his mind, ruin his estate, and fill his abode with untold horrors. While M. Oufle was chatting in his library with his son, who was as superstitious as himself, a lurid light filled the room; there was a rattle in the chimney, and a packet lay at the feet of the frightened pair. The contents were examined and discussed. M. Oufle was not convinced by the anti-astrological treatise; but, having to choose between two evils, thought it better to brave the anger of the stars than that of his own peculiar genius, and accordingly agreed to let his daughter have her way. Unfortunately for Rozine, her lover happened to express his private opinion of Mornand within the valet's hearing, and the rascal at once made a clean breast to his master, and confessed how he had helped to befool him. M. Belor received his dismissal with the assurance that he should not have Rozine if there was not another man in the world. The spirits had troubled M. Oufle no more after making off with his gold, and his furniture had ceased to be locomotive. This return to the normal state of things he attributed to his taking care to wear a diamond on his left arm, and always carry dewcake and honey, nettle and milfoil, about him, besides protecting his bed with purslane, and rendering his room inviolable by driving a coffin-nail into the floor, so that the door closed over it.

No sooner were the ghosts gone than M. Oufle's fancy peopled every place with devils bent on working him woe. Dogs, hogs, and flies became especially obnoxious to his sight. He would eat no pork, lest he might unwittingly introduce a devil into his interior. He would allow no fruit to appear on his table for fear of its attracting devils in the guise of flies, and he dared not engage a new man-servant or maid-servant, for fear of taking Satan into his service. A joiner, waiting upon him to receive instructions respecting some alterations in his bookshelves, brought with him a big spaniel, "which was not anything extraordinary, most handicraftsmen keeping such dogs for their amusement, as country gentlemen do for their profit." Instead of giving the man his orders, M. Oufle abused him for a magician, who had brought a demon into the house to torment him. The man resented the insult; Monsieur grew more excited; the slandered spaniel barked his mind; and, if some of the family had not interfered and got man and dog out of the house, it would have gone hard with the master of it. To guard against such intrusion for the future, M. Oufle mounted a large diamond ring, wanton spirits having an antipathy to the queen of gems, and occupied himself till his arm ached again in brandishing a huge sword, the brandishing of a naked sword being, as his books assured him, trying to the nerves of the satanic brood beyond endurance; while further, to ensure safety, he bought up every cock in the neighbourhood, that their united voices might scare evil-disposed sprites from venturing within the walls of his domain. Much to his disgust, Madame Oufle, with an eye to her larder, invested in hens in due proportion, and by doing so her husband believed chanticleer's shrill clarion became of no avail. However, by wearing one vulture's heart, tied with a lion's hair, and another tied with a wolf's hair, he contrived to keep all devils at a distance, until a clap of thunder burst right over the house-roof, and freed him for ever from such visitors.

Still, M. Oufle was not happy. Ghosts, indeed, no longer pestered him, devils no longer haunted him, but he was filled with a new dread, that of being bewitched. If anyone ran accidentally against him, or clapped him upon the shoulder, he instantly returned the compliment without any regard to good manners. If a man or woman looked him straight in the face, he took to his heels instanter; if anyone looked askance at him, he suspected they had a design against his life. If a man gaped, he thought he was preparing to swallow him; and if he heard the words "Strike, strike!" uttered, he looked fearfully round, expecting somebody to fall dead beside him. He would not accept a gift from his best friend, lest a charm lurked in it; and meeting a smith carrying an iron rod in his hand, he took him for an enchanter, and began capering round him, to the man's wonderment, and the delight of the street boys. While in this uncomfortable frame of mind, he got into a scrape which would have brought any other man to utter grief. Barring his books, M. Oufle prided himself most upon possessing the handsomest saddle-horse in France. As he was trotting homeward one day he passed a house, at the door of which stood a tall, gaunt, ugly woman, clad in a dismal night-gown, the sleeves of which came over her hands, after the fashion affected by widows and devotees. There was nothing remarkable in a woman standing at her own door, but the way in which this one stared at his horse filled him with strange misgivings, so that, when next day he learned that his favourite was scarcely able to move, he at once concluded that the animal had been bewitched by the woman in white, and resolved to beard the witch, if witch she were, in her den. Valorous as he was in his wrath, M. Oufle was too cautious to court defeat, and, before starting on his risky expedition, took care to make himself invulnerable to the spells of the foe. He greased his shoes with hog's lard, he smashed a looking-glass and placed some of the splinters on his shoulders, he filled his pockets with salt and onions, and provided a triangular cake, "like those of St. Lupus;" then, having spat upon his breast, hands, and right foot, he sallied forth. The cake he gave to the first beggar he met, and soon afterwards reached the supposed witch's abode. He entered the room where the lady awaited him, just as she finished washing her hands, and could hardly refrain from seizing the bowl and drinking up the water, in order to effectually paralyse her power of enchantment. As the lady turned towards her visitor, the latter observed two or three red pimples upon her face, indubitable signs that she could neither raise the devil or have any commerce with him. This discovery rather disconcerted M. Oufle; nevertheless, after a moment's hesitation, he boldly accused her of having bewitched his horse. Monsieur soon found he had caught a tartar, and was thinking how he could retract without loss of dignity, when he caught sight of a valuable watch lying on the table, and, remembering that by stealing anything from a witch or wizard one rendered their charms innocuous for evil, he slipped the watch into his pocket and bade the dame good day.

A little maid, curious to know what the strange gentleman's business might be, had quietly watched proceedings from the next room, and lost no time in proclaiming the theft. Her mistress at once gave chase, and, thanks to M. Oufle's slowness, arrived at his door just as it closed upon him. It was opened to her vigorous knocking, and the place resounded with her demand for justice and her property. Madame Oufle, who, of course, could not allow anyone but herself to abuse her husband, hearing him called a thief, called her daughters to her aid, and fell tooth and nail upon the intruder, who, big as she was, would have been murdered between them, had not the cause of the hubbub appeared, carrying the watch in one hand and a book in the other. The first he restored to its owner, while, opening the book, he showed her the authority upon which he had acted. Having recovered her watch, and seeing she had a madman to deal with, the lady was pacified, and, after repairing damages, took her leave. Then his youngest son confessed that he was to blame for all, having brought about the lameness of his father's horse by riding it too fast and too far. Convinced against his will, M. Oufle owned he had made a mistake, and congratulated himself that matters were no worse, but, obstinate and untractable as a Bourbon, "M. Oufle remained as whimsical and superstitious as ever."

With that unsatisfactory intimation abruptly ends the story of the extravagancies of M. Oufle, a story invented by a sanguine Frenchman, who thought that superstition might be killed by ridicule. Superstition, unfortunately, is too tough a subject to be laughed out of existence. It may change its form and put on new fashions, or wear old ones the newest kind of way, but die it will not; and, extravagant as the extravagancies of M. Oufle may seem, they have been matched by some of his prototypes in our own day of credulous incredulity.

UNDER THE HAMMER.

BILLINGSGATE.

Between three and four o'clock in the morning a great lull comes over London. Even the cabs have ceased from rattling and the omnibuses are at rest. There are no Mohocks now to make night hideous with their unholy revels: the bucks of the Waterford era have either passed away altogether, or subsided into respectable elderly gentlemen, not unacquainted with gout and asthma. They are peaceable enough now, those once roaring boys; they are particular as to the quality of flannel, keen critics of gruel and arrowroot, and are snugly tucked up in bed long before the hour under consideration. The later generation of fast men have developed into fathers of families, and no longer waken the echoes of the night with imitations of Swiss airs. The young men of to-day, if not more moral than the generations upon whom they look down from a scientific altitude, are at least more decorous. If they sin, they sin quietly, discreetly, and with due regard for "good form." They seldom stay at the club after two, and are dreaming of Angelina Sophonisba, or of the winner of the next Derby, long before four o'clock in the morning.

In the long line of march from Tyburn to London-bridge I meet nobody but policemen. Past the Holborn-viaduct, where perch those unhappy bronze lions who appear to have solidified at the moment when they were about to commence a game of American bowls; past St. Sepulchre's gloomy church (newly decorated, swept, and garnished); and past the ominous prison on the opposite side of the road, I take my way into the silent City. There I find the Iron Duke in front of the Royal Exchange as desolate as the statue of Memnon in the desert, and there do I discover that Cornhill at four A.M. is a howling wilderness, and Lombard-street an abomination of desolation; but, as I near London-bridge, signs of City life begin to manifest themselves. The moon is shedding her dying light on the Pool, with its dark forests of masts and steely band of water glittering between. As I gaze hurriedly on the picturesque scene, its beauty is increased by the first purple streak of daylight appearing behind the great dark mass of the Tower; and the struggle between the waning night and advancing day induces a regret that the gentleman who "stood on the bridge at midnight" had not remained there till sunrise. Few of the people abroad so early take heed of effects of sun or moonlight. Perhaps they are used to them, or are in too great a hurry. They are all bending their steps in one direction. From the Surrey side and from Fish-street-hill they push briskly towards a spot on the river bank, where lights have been moving to and fro for some little time. Drifting with the stream I find myself in Lower Thames-street, whose inhabitants are all alive and astir.

The great shops for the sale of "dry" and "wet" fish and shell-fish of every kind are swept out to bare emptiness, and await their stock from the operations of the morning. Carts and vans are beginning to arrive, and the crowd of men thickens as I reach the cause of all this early rising —Billingsgate.

The name of Billingsgate is derived, according to that amusing but not very veracious chronicler, Geoffrey of Monmouth, from one Biling, or Belin, a king of the Britons, who flourished in woad some four hundred years before the Christian era, and who built this gate—there is no gate, by-the-way—and "called it Belinsgate after his own calling," and who, on his death, was cremated, his ashes being placed in a "vessel of brass and set above the said gate." Stow, a sensible man in his generation, dismisses King Belin from consideration, thinking the so-called "gate" named rather from one Billing—if such person ever existed—whose wharf or quay retained his name, as Somar's-quay and Smart's-wharf retained the titles of their first possessors. Vincent Bourne prefers to adhere to an entirely different derivation. It has pleased this writer of pretty Latin verse to assume that Billingsgate is the "Janua linguarum," the bilingual, or "the double-tongued gate," on account of its possessing a language of its own far more incisive and graphic than the ordinary vernacular. Be its derivation what it may, Billingsgate, as a fish market, is comparatively a thing of yesterday. In the Plantagenet times fish was sold higher up stream, Queenhithe being prescribed as the proper spot for its debarkation. Ancient records tell us that at the Stock-market, held on the site of the present Mansion-house, the fishmongers paid a large price for their stalls, and legal enactments and onerous fines to the contrary notwithstanding, were rare "forestallers," or buyers-up and monopolists of fish. Edward the First, whose hand was heavy on real or presumed malefactors, essayed to put things straight by the comical mediæval expedient of fixing prices. The best soles were to be sold at threepence a dozen, best turbot at sixpence each, best mackerel at one penny each, best pickled herrings at one penny the score, best eels at twopence the quarter hundredweight, and fresh oysters (alas for these evil days!) at twopence the gallon. It was found difficult, however, to get the better of the "forestallers," who operated mainly in the dried-fish market—a large area in the old times, when, unless a man dwelling inland were well-to-do in the world, and, like Chaucer's franklyn, kept his stews or private fish-ponds, he depended almost entirely for Friday and Lenten food upon the great fairs held from time to time in the country towns. Supplies direct from the coast were uncertain, on account of the wretched roads; and housekeeping people, therefore, were thrown upon the mercy of the stock-fishmongers, as they were called, who controlled the inland markets.

Favoured by these conditions, the Fishmongers' Company — despite the heavy fines occasionally inflicted on its members —became a power in the City, and after various free-fights with other companies—notably the Skinners—took up its position after the great companies of the Goldsmiths, Grocers, and Drapers. William Walworth, who was mayor in 1370, and knocked Wat Tyler on the head, was a member of the Fishmongers' Company, as was Lovekin, four times Lord Mayor of London.

It would seem that the fish trade, like the coal trade of our own day, gradually worked down stream, till it drifted below bridge, and Billingsgate, long a port of departure for Gravesend and other places down stream, by degrees merged into a fish market. A large portion of its early business was composed of river fish, salmon and smelts being taken in immense numbers as high up the river as Wandsworth; but for all that, the most convenient spot, immediately below old London-bridge, was selected by popular consent as the proper site of a fish market. In 1699 Billingsgate was made a free market for the sale of fish, and soon became famous for that vivid interchange of vernacular pleasantry which will engraft its name in the English language for ages after Billingsgate itself, and perhaps London, may have passed away.

Of the market and its surroundings, four years after its formal recognition, Ned Ward, of "London Spy" celebrity, has left some curious memorials. In the course of his peregrinations he wandered towards Billingsgate early in the evening, determined to be on the spot early enough. "As Time, like a skilful gamester, had just nicked seven," he betook himself towards what were then called the Dark Houses of Billingsgate, and turning down a dark lane, found his companion and himself among the "maritime mobility," in a narrow lane, redolent of "stale sprats and irreverence." Seeking quarters for the night, he dropped into a "smoky boozing-ken, where sat a tattered assembly of motherly flat-caps, with their fish-baskets hanging on their heads, instead of riding-hoods, with everyone her nipperkin of warm ale, or brandy, and as many rings upon their thumbs as belongs to a suit of bed curtains." Loud of tongue and red of face were these—like unto "squab elephants," and using language which shocked even the redoubtable Ned Ward himself, who, whatever his other faults, was not squeamish. Among this shrieking crowd circulated the rakes of the day, in long wig and muff of fox-skin; watermen eating red herrings; and people staying overnight to catch the tide for Gravesend, enlivened now and then by drunken tarpaulins and their hired fiddler. There was great fun with the tarpaulins, who hung up their fiddler to cook over the fire, and indulged in many merry jests and stupendous yarns. One sailor told how he had been in Guinea, where the weather was so hot that they cooked steaks in the sun; but he was instantly capped by another, who told how, when in high latitudes, the words "froze in their mouth, so that they could not hear one another speak, till they came to a warmer latitude to thaw 'em; and then all our discourse broke out together, like a clap of thunder, and there was never such confusion of tongues since Babel"—a joke purloined by Baron Munchausen. The special correspondent of the day slept in a room stinking of pitch, tar, and tallow, and was up at three in the morning, to breakfast off a "pennyworth of burnt bread, softened in a mug of porters' guzzle, improved with a slice of Cheshire cheese," and on reaching the water-side was deafened with the roar of the water pouring through old London-bridge, was besieged by watermen, and abashed by the clatter of the "flat-caps," or fish-fags, there assembled.

As I stand on that part of the Custom-house-wharf yielded for awhile to Billingsgate, pending the construction of the new market, I wonder what King Edward the First would have thought of salmon at three shillings a pound, and oysters at ten guineas a bushel? What has become of Ned Ward's "dark houses," the rushing water, and the passengers for Gravesend by smack or "hoy?" The lodgings of Mr. Ward have vanished; the river rolls noiselessly through new London-bridge; people go to Gravesend without caring for the tide, by steamboat or railway, at a comfortable hour of the morning, when Nature has finished her ablutions, and the world is properly aired. There are no watermen now to pull you limb from limb in the struggle for a fare; the famous fish ordinary is in temporary quarters; and I look round in vain for the "flat-caps" before mentioned — the redoubtable fish-fags of rough tongue and ready repartee, flavoured with marine instead of Attic salt. There are no fish-fags to be found within the precincts of Billingsgate—the sole representatives of the superior sex being a trim damsel, with hair cut à la Gainsborough, engaged in the basket business, and a couple of elderly ladies, who come from afar off to buy stock for their fish shops. I suppose the extension of woman's sphere in other directions has withdrawn the fish-fag from her coarse work, and elevated her to a position more becoming to her sex; but be this as it may, she now ranks among the extinct bimana. Male porters do the hard work of Billingsgate, which, although a fixture by the water-side, yet draws yearly more and more of its supplies from the railway stations. Hence there is little bustle on the quays — little or no "smack" fish being to the fore this morning; while, from the land-side of the market, vigorous efforts are made to push in the contents of a fish train, just brought in vans from the station. From time to time inquiries have been made about the arrival of the Ramsgate and the Eastern Counties "prime" and "offal." Under one of these heads come the majority of fishes sold by auction at Billingsgate. Salmon is a separate and peculiar fish, sold by weight; smelts are also sold in little boxes by themselves; mackerel by the ped or trunk—a large box; "wet" herrings by the barrel; and plaice sometimes by the "Hull turn." This last is a kind of double-tiered basket, neatly packed with plaice round the top, and weighing ten stone—of fourteen pounds avoirdupois—a beautiful instance of the symmetry of our national weights and measures, for a stone of fish, alive or dead, is of the same weight as a stone of jockey or rowing man, and is six pounds heavier than a stone of beef.

The great bulk of flat fish and haddocks comes to market in wooden boxes only partially covered at the top, and marked with the name of the consignee, a fish salesman and licensed auctioneer. Each full box contains from a hundredweight and a quarter to a hundredweight and a half of fish. Here and there turns up what is called a "slack" box, imperfectly filled, but this is of no consequence, as buyers can examine it for themselves, and, indeed, must be their own judges, as neither weight nor freshness is guaranteed, but character only, be the same "prime," "mixed," or "offal." Mixed is a term requiring no explanation, but the others are incomprehensible at the first hearing. "Prime" denotes neither quality nor condition, but simply kind. As the fish are caught and packed in boxes with pounded ice, they are divided into two classes: turbot, brill, soles, and red mullet are "prime," and the three first especially are not packed separately, but piled into a box together. Thus, a box of "prime" may contain three or four turbot, half-a-dozen brill, and twenty or thirty pairs of soles, or may be made up entirely of the latter always marketable fish. It is the business of the buyer to look and bid accordingly. "Offal" consists not, as might be supposed, of refuse, or broken odds and ends, but, with the exception of special kinds, of all fish not prime. Thus a box of "offal" may hold large plaice and small plaice, haddocks, codling, gurnet, and the strange fishes called "roker" at Billingsgate—to wit, skate, old maids, and thornbacks. Codfish is either "prime" or "offal," as it is "live" or "dead," and when of fair size is sold by itself in lots of four fish each.

While I have been discoursing on these odd points of the fish-trade, the crowd has thickened with buyers to an extent which justifies the sellers in beginning business. In old times market was opened by a bell at five o'clock, but the bell has gone the way of the fish-fag, and is heard no more. There is a certain tact in selecting the right moment for business; but, as a rule, sellers like to be early, as they thus secure the best prices.

Under the flaring gaslights are ranged the salesmen's desks. Behind each of these stands the partner, head assistant, or alter ego of the auctioneer proper, who stands at his "form" or place, where the boxes of fish are deposited by the porters, clad in white smock-frocks and narrow-brimmed tarpaulin hats, strengthened and padded, as is needful enough, for your Billingsgate porter disdains to carry fish otherwise than on his head. The "boss" auctioneers, deskmen, and salesmen affect no peculiarity of costume beyond an apron and a pair of clogs—the latter very necessary on the slippery pavement. The auctioneers are waited upon by a "form man"—a very useful fellow if he knows his business well. This functionary takes charge of each box as it arrives, and sees to its delivery when sold. Before we proceed to watch an actual sale, let me premise that fish is not, as is generally supposed, sold at Billingsgate by Dutch auction. The latter form of selling is, or was, common enough on the seabeach, and is a reversal of the ordinary method of procedure. In a Dutch auction the seller stands before the lot and begins, "What shall we say for this? Two pound, two pound, two pound." No bidders. "Well, then, thirty-five shillings—thirty—twenty-five?" Not a sound is heard. "What will you give then?—twenty-four, three, two—twenty-two; you're very slow this morning—a guinea; will nobody give a guinea? Well, then," in tones of desperation, "a pound, a pound, a pound, nineteen shillings, eighteen—thank you, sir," and the lot is sold, the first bidder being the buyer. This custom is peculiar to certain ports, and is entirely unknown at Billingsgate, where, as we shall see, fish is sold by ordinary auction, but with greater rapidity than other produce.

As I perch myself on a stool which Mr. Adams kindly offers me, I hear that the "prime" is just about to be sold. While the book-keeper proceeds to take note of every box and its tally—bearing the name of the smack from which it was sent by rail to London—keeping meanwhile a sharp look-out for the money, or for the names of the great buyers who settle weekly, or monthly at farthest, the "form man" yells at the top of his resonant voice, "Sole buyer! sole buyer-r! sole buyer-r-r-r! sole buyer-r-r-r-r-r!" with an energetic screech at the end. Buyers of "prime" collect around the salesman, and the first box is placed before him. "What'll you give?" he asks with fierce energy, bending over the buyers, who crowd round the box to see what is in it, what proportion of turbot or brill, and what size of soles. Buyers' hands plunge eagerly into the box as the salesman hisses out, "What'll you give?" The faintest wink is bid enough for his quick eye. "Three pound—three pound ten, fifteen—four pound—four ten, fifteen. Have you done? Four fifteen," now turning to the deskman, "Four fifteen, Snooks." Book-keeper cries to the form man, "Tally?" "'Saucy Poll.'" "Right." The form man jumps on the box—takes his "bobbing-money," sixpence or a shilling, according to the value of the purchase—and then consigns it to a porter for delivery to the purchaser at his cart outside the market. All this is done at lightning speed. Bang goes another box on the pavement—primest of the prime this one—all large soles and turbot. "What'll you give?" asks the salesman. "Four—four ten—five pounds—guineas. Have you done? Five guineas, Smithers." "Tally!" shouts the deskman, and another box comes on. This requires judgment on the part of buyers—a mixed box, "prime" and "offal." It takes a quick eye and long practice to appraise the value of a hundredweight and a quarter of mixed—including a lordly turbot, a fine brill, soles big and little, haddocks, plaice, pipers, gurnets, and codlings. Bidding, however, is just as quick as ever, and at racing pace a hundred boxes of prime will be sold off hand for three or four hundred pounds sterling, according to the market: for nothing, except mining shares, varies in value like fish. A goodly turbot will one day represent a guinea—on another, half-a-crown; a lot of four prime "live" cod will sometimes fetch five pounds—sometimes five-and-twenty shillings. As one great salesman finishes off his lot of "prime," and is out of work for an hour—till the Eastern Counties "offal" comes to hand—the cry of "Sole buyer-r-r-r! sole buyer-r-r-r!" rings out from other "forms," and the great fishmongers watch the market carefully, buying to the best of their ability. They—the big men—can afford to buy in this way; but the little men often decline the struggle and risk of wholesale purchase, preferring to buy just what they want from a "bummaree." The gentleman who rejoices in this pretty name—"undè derivatur" no man knows—is generally clad in white from top to toe, and may be described as a species of middle-man between the consignee and the tradesman. Many "bummarees" are in a large way of business, and will buy, perhaps, a hundred pounds' worth of fish of a morning, sort it out on their stalls, sell it at a profit, and be up and away home by ten o'clock in the morning. No doubt a "bummaree" by any other name would smell as sweet; but there is compensation for this ugly title, and the serene consciousness of having made ten or fifteen pounds before the West-enders are awake, imparts to the life of the "bummaree" a tinge roseate as that which adorns the mullet. Pending the arrival of the "offal," a peculiar class of buyer has turned up—a buyer not sumptuous as to his raiment, but apparently well lined as to his pockets. Those greasy-looking men are "smokers," in quest of haddocks. Sandy McFinnan, with his high cheek-bones, his unshaven cheeks, and his ugly Cardigan jacket, is not a "thing of beauty" by any means; but he is, perhaps, the greatest "smoker" in the East-end. In the course of the year he turns many tons of haddocks out of his smoke-houses, and it requires the palate of a connoisseur to distinguish them from the real Scotch article. The sons of that unsavoury-looking father have been sent to the best schools, and are at the present moment occupied in the gentlemanly profession of the law; and his daughter draws eighty pounds per annum as governess in a nobleman's family, and is justly considered as the type of elegant gentlewomanhood, and a perfect arbiter of questions of etiquette and genealogy. That stately nobleman, the Lord Townmoor, is, of course, not aware of the occupation of Miss McFinnan's worthy father; but his son, the Hon. Alcibiades Doncaster, has had a good deal of old Sandy's money through the medium of that friend of youth, Mr. Howard Plantagenet Clinton, of Burlington-street. Sandy is buying haddocks box after box, at ten, eleven, or fifteen shillings; but, when plaice are put up, retreats with his purchases. Plaice, an important variety of "offal," is going off at a great rate into the hands of the second-class of "offal" buyers, the "fryers"—a hawk-nosed, hawk-eyed generation, Caucasian to the backbone—the proprietors of the great fried-fish shops of the East-end, compared with which those of St. Giles's are small potatoes indeed. Old Lewis Moss—his proper name is Levi Moses—is buying plaice galore. He will cut them into penny and twopenny slices, fry them with a skill unknown to plain cooks, and retail them to small dealers, or to the public, at a swingeing profit. He is a warm man is old Moss. He brought up his son "like a gentleman, sir;" but young Moss, who soon extended his name to Maurice, did not like fried-fish, oranges, or blacklead pencils as sources of revenue, and having done pretty well in "the Baron's year," now makes a book on his own account, and will stand "the field" against the Hon. Alcibiades Doncaster's selected favourite for a "monkey," over any course in England. His mother and sisters are the wonder and envy of Brighton. The Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley wear the richest furs, the heaviest gold collarettes, and ride the best horses; and, when walking on the Esplanade, would attract even greater admiration, were not the respectable Mrs. Moss—who has fried tons of fish in her time—with them, to show what those beautiful young creatures may possibly develop into with time.

At a great pace the "offal" is disposed of by those salesmen, beloved of buyers, who sell right off hand. This policy is not followed by all. That salesman with the stove-pipe hat and handsome beard, is the Fabius of the market, a genuine "cunctator," who "dwells" on his business and waits for his price, "letting," in Billingsgate parlance, "the fish hang round him." In selling he is cautious, but, if report speaks truly, he does not carry his Fabian tactics into the hunting-field, where he may be seen, after his morning's work is over, riding as straight as the best, and negotiating his fences in the most brilliant style. He is not the only hunting, or, for that matter, racing man in the fish market. One of the best-known "stock-fishmongers," who deals largely in "dry" and "wet" produce, owns a compact stud of flyers, and has pulled off many a good thing in his time. Another salesman—highly popular among the buyers—a proprietor of a fleet of smacks and a great master of repartee, has, "many a time and oft," come down to Billingsgate in the orthodox "pink and pickle jars," barely disguised by an overall, sold hundreds of boxes of fish, cracked a score of jokes, and put in an appearance at cover-side in time for a "quick thing" in the grass counties, for your Billingsgate auctioneer must take his pleasure by daylight. Late dinners, operas, and balls are not for him, for he must to bed by eight or nine P.M., that he may be fresh and alert at his work in the morning. Truly a healthy, natural life enough, and one that, if a man could do entirely without sleep, like a famous New York speculator, who spends his days in Wall-street and his nights at faro, would dovetail very well with that of a sub-editor of a daily newspaper, whose duties cease just in time to admit of his going to Billingsgate.

As I stroll out of the market, between pyramids of lobsters, sold by the dozen or the score, and of mighty crabs yet unslain in their baskets, comfortably packed with seaweed; past huge mounds of shrimps, sacks of oysters, and unknown quantities of mussels and whelks, I marvel, not where all this fish goes to from crowded Thames-street, but why fish does not form a far more important item of diet than it does. In days of yore dried fish formed a large proportion of the food of the English people; and, in more recent times, the dream of the philanthropist has been the utilisation of the boundless treasures of the Great Deep. Before the man who makes two blades of grass to grow in the place of one was invented, and admired, the necessity for improving inland communications, with the object of opening to all the blessing of abundant fresh fish, was felt by many philosophers of advanced views. The Society of Arts took a prominent part in the movement, and expended thousands of pounds in endeavouring to secure a regular supply of fish to the London markets. At a later date, in 1813, a meeting was held at the Thatched House to promote the same object, since facilitated by the rapid spread of the railway system. Communication has been so far perfected that there appears no good reason why English people should not be supplied with all the fish they care to eat, and at a moderate price. It must be confessed, however, that we are a slow-going people in dietary matters, and are still victims to a prejudice that fish is watery because it lives in the water, and is, therefore, an unsatisfactory food—a mere addition to meat rather than a sufficient meat in itself. I know a gentleman from the Midland counties who dislikes a London steak, and declares it is "nobbut air," because, after eating one, he does not feel that touch of indigestion which accompanies a barbarously-fried beefsteak in his native town. For some similar reason fish is thought not "satisfying;" but, if there be any truth in the dicta of our scientific pastors and masters, fish is at once the lightest, most agreeable, and most nourishing food at our command. It is digestible and it is strengthening, both to the body and the brain; for, so far as we know, it supplies a peculiar brain-nourishing element, in which coarser viands are deficient. It is easy to cook, demanding but little fuel, and very little, or at least a very short period, of attention. It is well known that fish-eating communities are exceptionally healthy and well grown—the Irish peasant, who lives on herrings and potatoes, affording a conspicuous example of the truth; and yet the great body of our countryfolk go on treating fish as a mere accessory, instead of a genuine aliment.

In the present state of our inland communications there is no doubt whatever that increased demand for fish would induce a commensurate supply, and that when, if ever, the English people place fish in its proper rank as food, there will be found boats, nets, and men enough to catch it in abundance, railways to carry it inland, and auctioneers to knock it down—albeit this operation is performed, in Billingsgate at least, without a hammer.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ONE dreary Sunday afternoon, about this time—that is to say, about the end of November—Matthew Diamond rang at the bell of Mr. Maxfield's door. He had a couple of books under his arm, and he asked the servant, who admitted him, if she could give him back the volume he had last lent to Miss Maxfield. Sally looked askance at the books, and shook her head doubtfully.

"It's one o' them French books, isn't it, sir? I don't know one from another. Would you please step upstairs yourself? Miss Rhoda's in the drawing-room."

Diamond went upstairs and tapped at the door of the sitting-room.

"Come in," said a soft, sweet voice, that seemed to him the most musical he had ever heard, and he entered.

The old room looked very different from what it had looked, in the days when Matthew Diamond used to come there to read Latin and history with Algernon Errington. There were still the clumsy beams in the low ceiling, and the old-fashioned cushioned seats in the bay-window, but everything else was changed. A rich carpet covered the floor; there were handsome hangings, and a couch, and a French clock on the chimney-piece; there was a small pianoforte in the room, too; and, at one end, a bookcase well filled with gaily-bound books. These things were the product of old Max's money. But there were evidences about the place of taste and refinement, which were due entirely to Rhoda. She had got a stand of hyacinths like those in Miss Bodkin's room. She had softened and hidden the glare of the bright, brand-new upholstery by dainty bits of lace-work spread over the couch and the chairs; and she had, with some difficulty, persuaded her father to substitute for two staring coloured French lithographs, which had decked the walls, a couple of good engravings after Italian pictures. There was a fire glowing redly in the grate, and the room was warm and fragrant. Rhoda was curled up on the window-seat, with a book in her hand, and bending down her pretty head over it, until the soft brown curls swept the page.

Diamond stood still for a moment in the doorway, admiring the graceful figure well defined against the light.

"Come in, Sally," said Rhoda. And then she looked up from her book, and saw him.

"I'm afraid I disturb you!" said Diamond. "But the maid told me to come up."

"Oh no! I was just reading——"

"Straining your eyes by this twilight! That's very wrong."

"Yes! I'm afraid it is not very wise. But I wanted to finish the chapter; and my eyes are really very strong."

"I thought you might be at church," said Diamond, seating himself on the opposite side of the bay-window, and within its recess, "so I asked the maid to get me the book I wanted. But she sent me upstairs."

"Aunt Betty is at church, and James; but father wouldn't let me go. He said it was so raw and foggy, and I had been to church this morning."

"Yes; I saw you there. But have you not been well, that your father did not wish you to go out?"

"Oh yes; I'm very well, thank you. But I had a little cold last week; and I should have had to walk to St. Chad's and back, you know. Father doesn't think it right to drive on the Lord's day, so he made me stay at home."

"How very right of him! What were you reading?"

He drew a little nearer to her as he asked the question, and looked at the book she held.

"Oh, it's a Sunday book," said Rhoda, simply. "The Pilgrim's Progress. I like it very much."

"I wonder whether you will care to hear of some good news I had to-day?"

"Oh yes; I shall be very glad to hear it."

"I think I stand a good chance of getting the head-mastership of Dorrington Proprietary School. Dorrington is in the next county, you know."

"Oh! I'm very glad."

"It would be a very good position. I am not certain of it yet, you know; but Dr. Bodkin has been very friendly, and has promised to canvass the governing committee for me."

"Oh! I'm very glad, indeed."

"I don't know yet myself whether I am very glad or not."

"Don't you?"

Rhoda looked up at him in genuine surprise; but her eyes fell before the answering look they encountered, and she blushed from brow to chin.

"No; it all depends on you, Rhoda, whether I am glad of it to the bottom of my heart, or whether I give it all up as a thing not worth striving for."

There was a pause, which Rhoda broke at length, because the silence embarrassed her unendurably.

"Oh, I don't think it can depend upon me, Mr. Diamond," she said, in a little quivering voice, that was barely audible; whilst, at the same time, she hurriedly turned over the pages of the Pilgrim's Progress, with her eyes fixed on them, although she assuredly did not see one letter. Diamond gently drew the book from her hand, and took the hand in his own.

"Yes, Rhoda," he said—and, having once called her so, his lips seemed to dwell lovingly on the sound of her name—"I think you do know! You must know that, if I look forward hopefully to anything in my future life, it is only because I have a hope that you may be able to love me a little. I love you so much!"

She trembled violently, but did not withdraw her hand. She sat quite still with downcast eyes, neither moving nor looking to the right or the left.

"Rhoda! Rhoda! Won't you say one word to me?"

"I'm trying—thinking what I ought to say," she answered almost in a whisper.

"Is it so difficult, Rhoda?"

She made a strong effort to command her voice, but she had not the courage to look full at him as she answered, "Yes; it is very difficult for me. I want to do right, Mr. Diamond. I want not to deceive you."

"I am very sure that you will not deceive me, Rhoda!"

"Not if I can help it. But it is so hard to say just the exact truth."

"I don't find it hard to say the exact truth to you. You may believe me implicitly, Rhoda, when I say that I love you with all my heart, and will do my best to make you happy if you will let me."

"I do believe you. I believe you are really fond of me. Only—of course you are much cleverer and wiser than I am, except in thinking too much of me—and you can say just whatever is in your mind. But I can't; not all at once."

"I will wait, Rhoda. I will have patience, and not distress you."

The tears were falling down her cheeks now, not from sorrow, but from sheer agitation. She thanked him by a gesture of her head, and drew her hand away from his very gently, and wiped her eyes. He could not command himself at sight of her tears, although he had resolved not to speak again until she should be calm and ready to hear him.

"My darling," he said, clasping his hands together and looking at her with eyes full of anxious compassion, "don't cry! Is it my fault? You must have had some knowledge of what was in my heart to say to you! I have not startled you and taken you by surprise?"

"No; that's just it, Mr. Diamond. It's that that makes me feel so afraid of doing wrong and deceiving you. I—I—have thought for some time past that you were getting to like me very much. Some one said so too. But yet I couldn't do anything, could I? I couldn't say, 'Don't get fond of me, Mr. Diamond!'"

"It would have been quite in vain to say 'Don't get fond of me.' I'm a desperately obstinate man, Rhoda!"

"So then I—I mean to tell you the exact truth, you know, as well as I can. I began to think whether I liked you very much."

"Well, Rhoda?"

There was a rather long silence.

"Well, I thought—yes, I did."

He clasped his arms round her with a sudden impetuous movement, but she held him off with her two hands on his shoulders. "No, but please listen! I did love somebody else once very much. Of course we were very young, and it was nonsense. But I did wrong in being secret, and keeping it from father. And I never want to be secret any more. And—though I do like you very much, and—and—I should be very sorry if you went away—yet it isn't quite the same that I felt before. That is the truth as well as I can say it, and I am very grateful to you for thinking so well of me."

He drew the young head with its soft shining chestnut curls down on to his breast, and pressed his lips to her cheek.

"Now you are mine, my very own—are you not, Rhoda?"

"Yes; if you like, Mr. Diamond."

Matthew Diamond had been successful in his wooing, after feeling very doubtful of success. And he should naturally have been elated in proportion to his previous trepidation. And he was happy, of course; yet scarcely with the fulness of joyful triumph he had promised himself, if pretty Rhoda should incline her ear to his suit. There was a subtle flavour of disappointment in it all. Rhoda had behaved very well, very honestly, in making that effort to be quite clear and candid about her feelings. It was a great thing to be able to feel perfect confidence in the woman who was to be his companion for life. And as to her loving him with the same fervour he felt towards her, that was not to be expected. She was gentle, sweet modest, thoroughly feminine, and exquisitely pretty. She was willing to give herself to him, and would doubtless be a true and affectionate wife. He held her slight waist in his arm, and her head rested confidingly on his bosom. Of course he was very happy. Only—if only Rhoda were not quite so silent and cold; if she would say one little word of tenderness, or even nestle herself fondly against his shoulder without speaking!

Some such thoughts were vaguely flitting through Diamond's mind when Rhoda raised her head, and, emboldened by the gathering dusk, looked up into his face and said, "You know it cannot be unless father consents."

"I shall speak to him this evening. Do you think he will be stern and hard to persuade, Rhoda?"

"I don't know. He said once that he would like to—to—that he would like to know I had some one to take care of me."

"On that score I am not afraid of falling short. Your father could give his treasure to no man who would take more loving care of her than I!"

"And then you are a gentleman; and father thinks a great deal of that, although he makes no pretence of being anything more than a tradesman himself. And of course I am only a tradesman's daughter. I am greatly below you in station—I know that."

"My Rhoda! As if there could be any question of that between us! Heaven knows I have been poor and obscure enough all my life! But now I shall be able to tell your father that I hope to have a home to offer you that will be at least not sordid, and the position of a lady."

"I hope you won't repent, Mr. Diamond."

"Repent! But, Rhoda, won't you call me by my name? Say Matthew, not Mr. Diamond."

"Yes; I will if you like. But I'm afraid I can't all at once. It seems so strange."

"I wish you liked my name one thousandth part as much as I love the sound of yours! It seems so sweet to be able to call you Rhoda."

"Oh, I like your name very much indeed. But I think, please, that you had better go now. The people are coming out of church, and I don't wish Aunt Betty to find you here before you have spoken to father."

Rhoda stood up as she said it, and Diamond had no choice but to rise too, and say farewell. He drew her gently towards him and kissed her. "Will you try to love me, Rhoda?" he said, in a tone of almost sad entreaty. "Do you think you shall be able to love me a little?"

"I should not have accepted you if I felt that I could never be fond of you," returned Rhoda, and a little flush spread itself over her face as she spoke. "But you know I have told you the truth. I have told you about——"

He put up his hand to check her. "Yes, yes; you have been quite candid and honourable, and I won't be exacting or unreasonable, or too impatient." He did not think he could endure to hear Rhoda, in her anxiety not to deceive him, recapitulate the confession of her "different feeling" for another man in days past; and yet he had known, or guessed, that it had been so.

Then he took his leave, an accepted lover; and he told himself that he was a very fortunate and happy man. As he passed the door of old Max's little parlour downstairs, he saw a light gleaming under the door into the almost dark passage. He stopped and tapped at the door. "Come in," said Jonathan Maxfield's harsh voice, And Diamond went into the parlour.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Old Max looked up at his visitor over his great tortoise-shell spectacles. He had a large Bible open on the table before him. The large Bible was placed there every evening, and on Sunday evenings any other volume which might chance to be lying in the parlour was carefully removed out of sight, to be restored to the light of day on Monday morning. This was a custom of the house, and had been so for years. It had obtained all through the Methodist days, and now lasted under the new orthodox dispensation. Since old Max had his spectacles on, it was to be supposed that he had been reading, and, since there was no other printed document within sight, not even an almanac, it was clear that he could have been reading nothing but his Bible. And yet it was nearly an hour since he had turned the page before him. He had been dozing, sitting up in his chair by the fire. This had latterly become a habit with him whenever he was left alone in the evening. And once, even, he had fallen into a sleep, or a stupor, in the midst of the assembled family, and, on awaking, had been lethargic in his movements and dazed in his manner for some time.

He was quite awake now, however, as he peered sharply at Diamond over his glasses. The latter found some little difficulty in beginning his communication, not being assisted by a word from old Max, who stared at him silently.

"I have a few words to say to you, Mr. Maxfield, if you are at leisure to hear them," he said at length.

"If it's anything in the natur' of a business communication, I can't attend to it now," returned old Max deliberately. "It has been a rule of mine through life to transact no business on the Lord's day, and I have found it prosper with me."

"No, no; it is not a matter of business, Mr. Maxfield," said Diamond smiling, but not quite at his ease. Then he sat down and told his errand. Maxfield listened in perfect silence. "May I hope, Mr. Maxfield, that you will give us your consent and approbation?" asked Diamond, after a pause.

"You're pretty glib, sir! I must know a little more about this matter before I can give an answer one way or another."

"You shall know all that I can tell you, Mr. Maxfield. Indeed, I do not see what more I have to say. I have explained to you what my prospects in life are. I have told you every particular with the most absolute fulness and candour. As to my feeling for your daughter—I don't think I could fully express that if I talked to you all night."

"What did my daughter say to you?"

"She—she told me that she was willing to be my wife, but that it must depend on your consent."

"Rhoda has always been a very dutiful daughter. There's not many like Rhoda."

"I appreciate her, Mr. Maxfield. You may believe that I do most heartily appreciate her. I have loved her long. But, of course, I could not venture to ask her to marry me, or to ask you to give her to me, until I had some prospect of a home to offer her."

"Ah! And this prospect, now — you aren't sure about it?"

"No; I am not quite sure."

"And, supposing you don't get the place—how then?"

"Why, then, Mr. Maxfield, I should look for another. If you will give your consent to my engagement to Rhoda, I am not afraid of not finding a place in the world for her. I have a fair share of resolution; I am industrious and well educated; I am not quite thirty years old. If you will give me a word of encouragement I shall be sure to succeed."

"Head-master of Dorrington Proprietary School, eh? Will that be a place like Dr. Bodkin's?"

"Something of that kind, only not so lucrative."

"Dr. Bodkin is thought a good deal of in Whitford."

"Mr. Maxfield, may I hope for a favourable answer from you before I go?"

Old Max struck his hand sharply on the table as he exclaimed, almost with a snarl, "I will not be hurried, sir! nor made to speak rashly and without duly pondering and meditating my words." Then he added, in a different tone, "You are glib, sir! mighty glib! Do you know what Miss Maxfield will have to her portion—if I choose to give it her?"

"No, Mr. Maxfield, I do not. Nor do I care to know. I would take her to-morrow if she would come, although she were the poorest beggar in the world."

"And would you take her without my consent?"

"I would, if you had no reasonable grounds for withholding it."

"You would steal my daughter away without my consent?"

"I said nothing about stealing. I should not think of deceiving you in the matter. I think you must acknowledge that I am speaking to you frankly, at any rate!"

Maxfield could not but acknowledge to himself that the young man was honest and straightforward, and spoke fairly. He was well-looking too, and had the air of a gentleman, although there was not a trace about him of the peculiar airy elegance, the graceful charm of face and figure, which made Algernon Errington so attractive. Neither had he Algernon's gift of flattery, so adroitly conveyed as to appear unconscious; nor—what might, under the present circumstances, have served him equally well with the old tradesman—Algernon's good-humoured way of taking for granted his own incontestable social superiority over the Whitford grocer. Maxfield had his doubts as to whether this young man, ex-usher at the Grammar School, a fellow who went about to people's houses and gave lessons for money, could prove to be a fine enough match for his Rhoda, even though he should become head-master at Dorrington.

"I shall have some conversation with my daughter, and let you have my answer after that, sir," said he, looking half-sullenly, half-thoughtfully at the suitor. "And as there will be questions of figures to go into, maybe, I am not willing to consider the subject more at length on the Lord's day."

But I am bound to confess that this was an afterthought on old Max's part.

When Diamond had gone, the old man sent for his daughter to come to him in the parlour. "You can take yourself off, Betty Grimshaw," said he to that respectable spinster, very unceremoniously. "You and James can bide in the kitchen till supper's ready. When it is, come and tell me."

Rhoda came, in answer to her father's summons, very calmly. She had, of course, expected it. She had quite got over the agitation of the interview with her lover, and was her usual sweet, placid self again. Yes; she said Mr. Diamond had asked her to marry him, and she was willing to marry him if her father would consent. She believed Mr. Diamond loved her very much, and she liked him very much. She had been afraid of him once, because he was so very learned and clever, and seemed rather proud and stern. But he was really very gentle when you came to know him. She was sure he would be kind to her.

"It's not a thing to decide upon all in a moment, Rhoda," said her father.

"No, father; but I have thought of it for some time past," answered Rhoda, simply.

The old man looked at her with a slight feeling of surprise. "Rhoda has a vast deal of common sense," thought he. "She has some of my brains inside that pretty brown head of hers, that is so like her poor mother's!" Then he said aloud, "You see, this Mr. Diamond is nobody, after all. A schoolmaster! Well, that's no great shakes."

"Dr. Bodkin is a schoolmaster, father."

"Dr. Bodkin is rector of St. Chad's and D.D., and a man of substance besides."

"Mr. Diamond is a gentleman, father. Everybody allows that."

"Do you think you could be happy to be his wife, Rhoda?" As he asked this question, her father's voice was almost tender, and he placed his hand gently on her head.

"Yes, father; I think so. He would take care of me, and be good to me, and guide me right. And he would never put himself between you and me, father; I mean he would wish me always to be dutiful and affectionate to you."

"Well, Rhoda, we must consider. And I hope the Lord will send me wisdom in the matter. I would fain see thee happy before I am called away. God bless thee, child."

Jonathan Maxfield turned the matter in his mind during the watches of the night with much anxious consideration. In social status there was truly not much to complain of, he thought. A man in a position like that of Dr. Bodkin, who should have money of his own (or of his wife's) to render him independent of the profits of his place, might come to be a personage of importance. "And money there will be; more'n they think for," said old Max to himself. "The young man seemed to worship Rhoda; as he ought. He's out and away a better man than that t'other one! Lives clear and clean before the world, and is ashamed to look no man in the face."

Thus old Max reflected. And it will be seen that his reflections tended more and more to favour the acceptance of Matthew Diamond as his son-in-law. Yes; he should be glad to see Rhoda safe and happy under a husband's care, before he died. And yet—and yet—he felt, as the prosperous wooer had felt, a dim sense of dissatisfaction. Old Max could not be accused of being sentimental, but he had looked forward to Rhoda's marriage as an occasion of triumph and exultation. If she found a husband whom he approved of, he would be large and generous in his dealings with them. He would show the world that Rhoda Maxfield was no tocherless lass, but an heiress, courted, and sought after, and destined to belong to a sphere far above that of Whitford shopkeepers. Now the husband had been found—he had almost made up his mind as to that—but there was no exultation; certainly no triumph. Rhoda was so cool and quiet. Very sensible! Oh, admirably sensible; but——. In a word, the whole affair seemed a little flat and chilly. Of all the three personages chiefly interested, Rhoda was the only one who was conscious of no disappointment.

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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

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BOOK I. CHAPTER I. A PROSPEROUS GENTLEMAN.

When visitors to the colony of New South Wales, who had the advantage of Mr. John Pemberton's acquaintance, told him that his house reminded them with especial force and pleasantness of England, they told him that which he liked well to hear. He heard it said pretty often, for he was a hospitable person, and visitors to Sydney were always told that they ought to have a look at Randwick, with its model racecourse, its pleasant surroundings of rural scenery, and its grand view of the bay of Coogee, with the long, thundering rollers of the Pacific breaking upon the fair curving shore. A kind of inland Brighton to the London of New South Wales, Randwick is a favourite residence for the merchants whose business lies in the city of Sydney; and many handsome "places" crown its heights, or stretch down into the Waterloo valley, beyond which rise the heights of the capital itself.

They said truth, those frequent visitors to John Pemberton's solid, handsome country house, which stood well away from its neighbours in its plantation of blue gum-trees; which, if they lacked the changeful beauty of the forest lords "at home," had compensating beauty and grandeur of their own; with its wattle-bushes; its violet-scented myall—a highly-prized survival of the old times, when all the country was open; its noble cedars; and its mighty iron-barks, tall, straight, and strong, covered with dark foliage, and with deep fissures in their rugged bark filled with black, glittering gum, as though molten iron had been run into them. Regarded in detail, neither the house nor its surroundings were really like "home;" but there was enough of superficial resemblance, studiously cultivated by John Pemberton, in the scrupulous order and the "fresh as paint" look of everything, and in the devices by which seclusion was secured—though the entrance gave upon the high road to Sydney, and Randwick proper was only a couple of miles away—to justify the repetition of the compliment. The house was low, roomy, square, built on four sides of a court-yard, and fitted with a wide flower-and-leaf-adorned verandah both on its inner and outer sides; and it had the well-to-do look as plainly to be recognised in the physiognomy of houses as it is in that of men and women all the world over.

Within all the country side which lies between the Blue Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, from Port Jackson to Shoalhaven—and it would be difficult to point out a more beautiful bit of the earth's surface—there was, perhaps, no more truth-telling physiognomy in stone and trellis-work than that of Mount Kiera Lodge, for John Pemberton had called his house after the nearest local celebrity in mountains. The prosperous dwelling of a prosperous man, the house and its owner look right well matched when we see them first on a glowing, glorious afternoon in the antipodean midsummer, a little before Christmas.

If Mount Kiera Lodge looked like a bit of Sussex transplanted to New South Wales, John Pemberton was as racy of the soil of the far-away fatherland. A typical Englishman was this upright, well-built, grizzled-haired, broad-shouldered, gray-eyed, clean-shaven man of a little over fifty, who had not seen England for more than twenty years; but who, during the whole twenty, though he had addressed himself to his business in the colony with purpose and perseverance, had never relinquished the intention of going home so soon as he should have made a fortune.

John Pemberton's mind was as elastic as most people's on the subject of this fortune. It presented itself under very different aspects as time wore on, and the small capital, with which he had gone out to the colony, turned itself over and over again in his enterprising hands. The few thousands with which he would have been well satisfied to return to England at first seemed, when they were in his possession, a mere pittance; he must at least double them. Thus time sped on, and "home" was not realised after twenty years of a fairly fortunate career, though John Pemberton was held to be one of the richest men in New South Wales.

It was coming though, the fulfilment of that vision, whose baselessness so many have proved—the return of a man not yet old enough to take kindly to inaction in a country wherein the place which he has so long forsaken knows him no more, and where a new generation has arisen, with whose aims and pleasures he has no sympathy. Nothing in John Pemberton's life in the colony was likely to become him more than the leaving it, for he was on the point of effecting a highly advantageous sale of Mount Kiera Lodge, land, outbuildings, house fittings, furniture—all complete as they stood—to a colonist who had, like him, made a fortune, though a smaller one, and did not mind taking things in the lump.

Yes, he was going home; the long vacation had come—well earned after twenty years, which John Pemberton, in the eagerness of his expectation, did not hesitate to assure himself had been full of toil and anxiety, though in cold blood he would never have denied that the lines had fallen to him in pleasant places; and he hardly liked to confess, even to his wife, with what delighted exultation he contemplated the prospect. There was just one drawback, indeed, to this expectation—he could not get his wife to share it. She had rather submitted to than acquiesced in his decision; she had expressed no personal sentiment of pleasure; she had discussed no plans of her own in reference to the voyage, the settling in England, and the new life that awaited them there.

It was very odd, John Pemberton thought—for his wife was of a soft and sympathetic nature, and no thought or hope of his had ever before failed to find its echo in her heart, and its reflection in her smile—and the prospect of England, of London, of the pleasant life of the world's metropolis, might fairly have had great attraction for a woman still young, and so well fitted to take her place in it as his Mary.

On the lawn on which the house stands, though the grass is rather brown than green, the flower-beds are gaily decked with richly-tinted flowers, which would be under glass at home, and the foliage which covers the verandah is starred all over with gorgeous blossom. In the verandah, well within the shade of a sunblind, in a low chair placed on the cool matting, sits a lady—Mrs. Pemberton. She is young to be the wife of a man of John Pemberton's age; she has certainly not seen her thirtieth year, and might be supposed to be several years short of it, only that her complexion has faded somewhat, and her expression is very thoughtful and composed. She is a handsome woman, fair, with abundant dark hair, dark brown eyes, a slight, graceful figure, and the stamp of refinement upon her movements and her dress. John Pemberton stands beside her work-table, which he has invaded by a bundle of papers relating to the sailing of ships, and he is talking to her about the satisfactory state of his arrangements for the final winding up of everything at Sydney. His wife listens, but she smiles only faintly, and her gaze turns regretfully upon the flower-decked lawn, and lingers on the belt of noble trees beyond it.

"I hope they will not make many changes here," she says, when John Pemberton has concluded his history of the bargain, by which, in two months from that day, the transfer of Mount Kiera Lodge to Mr. Sharland is to be accomplished. "Though we shall never see the place again, it would pain me to think of it as much altered. We have been so happy here."

"We have, indeed," her husband answers heartily, and his frank eyes rest on her with perfect trust and love; "and we shall be very happy anywhere, so long as we are together. I don't say that I shall not be sorry when the time comes to say good-bye to all this—after all, the five best years of my life have been spent here—but there is nothing like England, when one can afford it. I wish you were as much pleased with the prospect as I am."

"I left England so lately in comparison with you, you must remember, and I have nothing and no one to return to: all my world is here."

"You mean that you have no fancies about it like your silly old husband, who talks like a schoolboy before the holidays; for, as for real ties there, we are pretty much on a level. You have no relatives, and I have none whom I have seen for twenty years. But, after all, it's the country—it's the places—it's the face of London one wants to see, as much as the people whom one remembers."

John Pemberton walked to and fro in the verandah for a few moments, and then approached his wife again:

"You have no real dislike to our move, have you, Mary? Because, if you have, you know, tell me now, and I'll make up my mind to stay. It wouldn't be like you to hide it from me until now if you had; but even you, I suppose, might possibly be unreasonable and inconsistent for once in a way, and you may not have felt sure of your own mind in the matter, until it came so near as the sale of the house. Say it out, my love, if it be so. Nothing could really please me, or please me for long, that did not thoroughly please you also. Perhaps the consideration of Ida has weighed too much with you?"

"My dear John," said Mrs. Pemberton, laying her hand impressively upon her husband's arm, and speaking very earnestly, "how can you suspect me of such deep-seated silliness? If I had had any real dislike to what will be the fulfilment to you of the hope of years—of years before you ever saw me—I think I should have conquered it; but if not, I certainly should not have kept it to myself until this stage of our proceedings, and then plagued you like a spoilt child. I shall be as happy there as here—do you think it could be otherwise, when you feel about it as you do?—only this has been a haven of rest to me, as well as a most happy home, and you must let me have my little bit of sentiment about it."

"That's all right then!" said John Pemberton, "and you have relieved my mind, for I haven't altogether liked your looks, since we have been thinking about going home. I will leave these with you"—he laid his hand on the papers on her work-table—"and you can look over them. I like the notion of the Royal Adelaide myself; she's a fine ship, and the captain is a good fellow."

"You are not going out in this heat?"

"No; it will be delightful by-and-by, when the breeze gets up. I am going to write letters just now. I have to send down a packet by the coach."

He was about to pass through the French window, which opened on the verandah, into the house, when a voice calling "Papa" arrested him, and an oddly-assorted pair of companions turned the corner of the house and approached the verandah.

They were a girl and a horse. A pretty girl of some seventeen years old, with bright dark eyes, a fine complexion, and a profusion of glossy dark hair, which hung in thick curls under the shade of her wide straw hat. A noble horse, a grand specimen of the New South Wales race—a roan, with black points, and full of the strength, speed, and courage of his country. He walked by the girl's side as a dog might have walked, and, when they came opposite to the verandah, the girl laid her hand on his mane and leaned against him easily.

"We've been looking for you, papa," she said; "we want to know about the ships. You've got the papers?"

"Yes, I've got the papers, and we will consult about them this evening."

"Come and tell Dick and me about them now; we're just going round to the paddock," said the girl, and her father stepped obediently from the verandah to the lawn. "It's too hot for Mary."

With a smile and a nod she passed on, her father on one side of her, on the other Dick, with his soft black muzzle thrust under her arm.

When the group was hidden from her by the trees, Mrs. Pemberton sighed deeply, and lay back in her chair with her eyes closed and her hands clasped on her lap.

"And I thought—I believed it was all dead and buried;" so ran her thoughts. "I never feared its ghost would rise before me thus. I have been happy, I have forgotten; it has all rested undisturbed by the least movement of memory for months and months at a time; but now!—— And what is it I fear? Good heavens! how weak I am! What is it? I must clear those cobwebs out of my brain, lest they come between me and my husband. They have been very near to so coming of late, and that must never, never be! My kind husband, my generous husband, who took all my past upon trust, and never wavered in that trust. Never! Anything rather than that. I could take him at his word and let him give up the project he has cherished all these years; yes, I could let him give up his return to England first, for he loves me better than England, than his project, or his dream; and he would give them up rather than a shadow should cross the clear light in which he and I have stood always, face to face. What ails me? It is so long past, so utterly done with, and yet it came back to frighten me. It came back faintly the first time John spoke to me of a fixed intention of going to England; it has come back with increasing clearness and strength every day since. Am I afraid to return to England, lest by any chance I should see him? Can it be? Am I the same woman that I was a short time ago, and capable of asking myself this question? I am full of a superstitious dread, I know not of what: I dare not ask myself of what. Was it only distance—only the dastard's security of flight which protected me from myself? Has all my womanly dignity failed me, and have the countless sweetnesses of my five years' life dropped out of it into forgetfulness, that the certainty of seeing the place where he used to be has shaken me thus? I surely must be ill, or this mere shadow of the past—that past which was itself only a delusion—could not fall upon me thus. John sees it; it is falling upon him too, and he never questions it to know whence it comes. 'I have not altogether liked your looks since we have been thinking about going home;' those were his words just now, but under them no suspicion, no distrust, not the smallest misgiving. And it is not that he has forgotten; it is not that the daily life together has killed sentiment or made him indifferent to things which concern the feelings only. No; it is his perfect trust in me; it is his absolute adherence to that old bargain which we made, when he told me that he was well content. In his life there was a dead first love; why should he murmur because there was a dead first love in mine? He was satisfied with the love and the faith I gave him. And they have been true; oh yes, Heaven knows they have been true; but—his dead first love lies under the ground, a peaceful, beautiful, perpetual memory, while the ghost of mine walks!——"

She had risen, as it were, unconsciously, and stood, with her hands raised to her head, looking out before her, with a searching gaze, as though her eyes were really seeking a figure upon a far-off shore. After a little, she let her hands fall wearily, and came out of her reverie. Then she collected the papers which John Pemberton had recommended to her attention, and went into the house.

The afternoon wore on, the heat abated, and the delicious breeze of evening came to stir the trees and make them break their languid silence, and to waft the perfume of the flowers up in one sweet breath of incense to the vanishing day god before they should address themselves to slumber. Quiet and seclusion were habitual aspects of Mount Kiera Lodge, but they were peculiarly perceptible at this delightful hour which its inmates loved the best. The rhythmical stirring of the wind in the trees has been for some time the only sound audible, when Ida Pemberton and her father come into the verandah, and Ida says:

"Tea on the lawn, papa, us usual, I suppose? You will be back in half an hour." She held her head up, listening. "I hear the coach now"—the distant ring of horses' hoofs was indeed audible—"you will just catch it at the gate. There, I can't hear it now; it's in the dip."

"I'll be off then," said her father. "Mary wouldn't care to come to the gate, I suppose?"

"I think not. She is tired, I fancy, for when I went to look for her just now she was in her room; and when I knocked, she said she should lie down until tea-time."

"The voyage will do her a world of good," said John Pemberton; and then he walked away across the lawn towards the tree-shaded avenue.

A couple of servants came out of the house, carrying a folding-table and the tea-equipage, and, gaily assisted by Ida, made preparations for the pleasant outdoor meal. The girl flitted about in the summer evening, in her white muslin gown and fluttering ribbons, like an animated flower; and her final contribution to the arrangements was a huge bowl of roses, which she set down in the middle of the table with a triumphant laugh.

"I suppose papa will tell us those are nothing compared to the English roses," she said. "Don't they look lovely? Now we should be all right, if only Dick could sit down to tea. What's that? A shout! Papa's voice in the avenue!"

She paused for one frightened moment,

caught the sound again: her father's voice calling, "Perry! Perry! Come here!" and ran off like a deer in the direction of the cry.

As Ida sped along the winding avenue, she saw the man whom her father had called, running across a field on the left, ahead of her; and she made out in a minute or two that the gate at the end of the avenue was open, that the coach had come to a stop in the road opposite to it, and that a group of three persons, one of them her father, just inside the gate, were lifting or carrying something between them. She stopped, her heart beating with a strange terror, as their burthen became more distinctly visible, and she saw a man's legs dangling helplessly over the arms of Perry, and could make out a hatless head lying against her father's shoulder. She stood still, watching the hurried yet cautious approach of the huddled-up figures, and saw that the two persons who accompanied them stopped to speak to one another for a moment; that one of them ran back softly to the gate and climbed up on the coach, which instantly drove off; while the other, after a word with her father, relieved him of his share of the helpless load. John Pemberton ran on in front, and was presently alongside of Ida.

"What is it, papa?" she cried. "What has happened?"

"Come on," he said, without an instant's pause. "A gentleman, a stranger, has fallen from the coach—I saw the fall—and is quite insensible—dead, perhaps."

"Oh, papa, how dreadful!" Ida ran breathlessly by her father's side. "What's to be done?"

"We must lay him down in the study, and wait until Dr. Gray comes. They have gone to fetch him. Go in and have the couch cleared, and call the servants to help. I must tell Mary."

Ida ran on to the house door; her father struck across the lawn. His wife was standing by the tea-table, out of sight of the avenue, and looked at him, smiling, as he came towards her. All the trouble had gone from her sweet face; her eyes were bright, and the slight tinge of colour which she lacked to make her face beautiful, had come to her cheeks. A mantilla of rich Spanish lace lay upon her dark hair, in which she had placed one of Ida's roses, and her dress, which was black, but of some transparent material which set off the beauty of her neck and arms, became her graceful figure well.

"I think the Royal Adelaide—" she began —— "Why, John, what is the matter?"

"Nothing to alarm you, dear," said John Pemberton, "but something unpleasant. I have had to bring a man who has met with an accident up here. Just as I got to the gate, as the coach was coming up, one of the passengers, whom the others had seen to be very ill, fell suddenly over the side; how he escaped from being killed I cannot conceive. I saw him fall, and had no notion but that he must have been killed. However, Woodroofe managed to pull up in some wonderful way, and we got him up, and found him not apparently hurt—no bones broken, I mean—but quite insensible. There was nothing to be done except bring him here—no one on the coach knows anything about him. Woodroofe is to send Gray up as quick as he can come from Randwick. I could not avoid it, you see."

"Of course not, of course not. Where is he? Are they carrying him up?"

"Perry, and a man who was also on the coach, but jumped off to help, and said he would stay to see what became of the poor fellow, are carrying him. Ida has gone to get the couch in the study cleared of my rubbish. We must put him there till Gray sees him."

"Let us go to him at once."

"I think you had better not, love. There's nothing to be done until the injury is ascertained; and the sight of him might shock you."

"It won't do that, John," said Mrs. Pemberton, moving towards the house. "And he must not be left to the servants only."

While they were crossing the verandah, Ida came quickly towards them.

"Papa," she said, "the other gentleman says the poor man is coming to his senses, and must have brandy."

"Of course," said Mrs. Pemberton, hurrying on. "Get it, John; I will go to him."

She entered the study alone. Three persons were in the room. One was Perry, who had helped to carry the sufferer, and was now standing at the head of the couch, on which he had deposited his burthen; the second was a man who knelt on the floor beside the couch, with his back to the door, and gently fanned with a newspaper the face of the third, who lay extended at full length, his helpless arms by his side. On that face Mrs. Pemberton's glance fell at once; on that wasted fever-stricken face, soiled with the dust of the road, but not wounded, the eyeballs prominent under the closed discoloured lids, the cheek-bones and the hollow temples showing gauntly under the tightened skin, the mouth drawn and shrunken, the dank dishevelled hair falling back from the livid forehead.

She looked at the unconscious figure, uttered an inarticulate sound, unheeded by either of the other two men, who were intent on the sufferer's face, put one hand before her eyes, stretched the other out as if to ward off a blow, and was caught in John Pemberton's arms, as she swayed heavily forward in the first fainting fit of her life.

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

JOHN LAW.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I. THE ROYAL BANK OF FRANCE.

One of the most widely spread and extraordinary delusions of the present day, is that the mania for speculation, the insane haste to get rich, at whatever risk, is a new thing, the offspring of modern education, modern materialism, modern worldliness, and the rest of it. Those philosophers who never shine to such great advantage as when denouncing the vileness of the present age, tell us roundly enough that we are given over entirely to Mammon; that the lust of gold fills our corrupt hearts; that the spirit of the age is not that of a trader, but of a gambler; that, instead of working patiently and well for a modest wage, after the manner of our respectable ancestors, we want to "get rich all at once;" that to achieve this object we stick at nothing, and are prepared to risk not only our own property (if we happen to have any), but that of our wives, children, parents, and friends. Perhaps the great body of my country folk like this chastening discourse, and as a prosperous, pampered, and overfed generation, feel that it acts upon them as a species of moral "bitters"—restoring them to tone to-day, and stringing up their nerves for fresh iniquities to-morrow. I confess that so long as the whole generation is abused collectively, I do not find these jeremiads unpalateable—it is only when they are applied too exactly to individuals that they become nauseous; but yet I cannot but feel it my duty, after having the worship of the True—with a big T—dinned into my ears for a quarter of a century, to rise up and testify also. I fear we are a bad lot, but am consoled by finding that the prophets, and teachers, and moralists have said the same thing of every generation which has existed under the sun, and that the eagerness to become suddenly rich, which is assumed to be the besetting sin of these latter days, is as old as humanity itself. Without referring to those antique Romans who were possessed with the accursed thirst of gold, and hungered for the cash of others, because they were profuse of their own, I can cite abundant instances of the haste of our own respectable ancestors to get rich—anyhow. In the later Stuart and earlier Hanoverian days, sober merchants invested their cash in privateering, buccaneering, or piratical expeditions, as did their successors in smuggling ventures, and when piracy became slack, plunged heavily into South Sea, Darien, and other schemes. The titled classes preferred simple gaming, and at hombre, faro, basset, and other ingenious games contrived to win and lose fortunes in gratifying their tastes; and no sooner was a gentleman completely cleaned out, than he took as naturally to the road as his descendant does to the City, and "flashed," or did not "flash the muzzle," on the "high toby spice" with as much grace as the out-at-elbows aristocrat of to-day displays in the noble career of a "guinea-pig," or "straw" director of a joint-stock company.

In a previous paper of this series I took the liberty of pointing out that the acquisitive instincts of man must be satisfied, and that when buccaneering went out of fashion he had but the option of piracy or stock-jobbing; but I am compelled to add that, in addition to the simple desire of man for that which "isn't his'n," there is the nobler feeling that a certain personal risk is involved in the capture. It is the element of chance—the gambling fibre in the trader—which lends to financial speculations an invincible attraction. In the middle ages it was unnecessary to step beyond legitimate trade to enjoy all the emotions of the gamester. There was plenty of excitement in the ordinary course of business. Every venture was a desperate cast. It was long odds against the arrival of any cargo anywhere. If life was unsafe, property in transit was worth very little indeed.

On leaving the harbour of Constantinople or Trebizond, the argosies had not very far to travel to Venice, Genoa, or Marseilles; but the vessels were crazy, the mariners of the true Mediterranean breed, and the sea was thick with pirates of all sorts and nationalities. In the land journey across the Continent almost equal dangers were encountered. Emperors and kings, dukes and princes, taxed and tolled without mercy, and lesser potentates eked out their more slender rights by the strong hand, and either plundered merchants outright, or levied heavy blackmail on them. Added to these foreseen dangers were the chances of war breaking out suddenly, and stopping operations altogether; of the imposition of embargoes, to prevent the scarcity of certain commodities; and the plunder of authorised and unauthorised persons. Taking all these risks together, the wonder is, not that commerce was restricted, but that any existed at all; and the fact that bales of sweet almonds, tuns of Bordeaux wine, and silks from the far East reached this country, reflects immense credit upon the enterprise of the commercial world of that day. The profits of the olden time must have been enormous to cover the risk, and probably this wide margin of profit explains the immense fortunes realised by Jacques Coeur, the Fuggers, and the great families of Venice and Genoa. A voyage was, as it was called, a "venture," which would make either "men or mice" of the adventurers. During the speculative and exciting times, the invention of bills of exchange and the establishment of the two great banks—that of St. George, at Genoa, and the Bank of Amsterdam—had to a certain degree spoiled brigandage as a regular profession, by rendering the frequent transfer of hard cash less necessary, but, by the introduction of paper money, provided a great opportunity for the daring spirits of the future. The great banks of Genoa and Amsterdam were founded on the confidence of merchants in each other, and their dread of other members of the community. The Banks of England and of France were called into existence by the wants of the Government, and in the latter case supplied an extraordinary medium for speculation. In England, William Paterson, and in France, John Law, achieved celebrity in the world of finance by successes and failures which bear an extraordinary resemblance to each other. Law's Banque Générale, if it had been left alone, might have proved as successful as its Genoese, Dutch, and English predecessors; the Mississippi scheme was an afterthought, like Paterson's Darien project, and the famous South Sea Bubble. Paterson's scheme, however, differed from those of Law and Sir John Blunt, in being independent of any alliance with a royal, national, or joint-stock bank; nor must it be confounded with the schemes for establishing land banks, which occupied the attention of such enthusiasts as John Briscoe and Hugh Chamberlayne, whom Lord Macaulay dubs, "two projectors worthy to have been members of that academy which Gulliver found at Lagado." The project of the two latter was to restore commerce and prosperity by issuing enormous quantities of notes on landed security. The doctrine of the projectors was that every person who had real property ought to have, besides that property, paper money to its full value. "Thus, if his estate was worth two thousand pounds, he ought to have his estate and two thousand pounds in paper money. Both Briscoe and Chamberlayne treated with the greatest contempt the notion that there could be an over-issue of paper as long as there was, for every ten-pound note, a piece of land in the country worth ten pounds. Nobody, they said, would accuse a goldsmith of over-issuing, so long as his vaults contained guineas and crowns to the full value of all the notes which bore his signature." Indeed, it was added, no goldsmith (the original banker) had in his vaults guineas and crowns to the full value of his paper. In these theories, which were pushed to an extravagant length, it is easy to discern the germ of the modern Crédits Fonciers, which hitherto have perhaps hardly proved an unmixed benefit to mankind. They met with some favour during the reign of William and Mary, and though believed to be merely started by Tory politicians as rivals to the Bank of England—a Whig institution—a charter of incorporation was granted to the Land Bank, which, loved by the Tory country gentlemen who wanted to borrow money, would perhaps have been looked kindly upon by the Whig merchants, who were prepared to lend it, had it not been at once apparent that it was intended to ruin the Whig institution. As a matter of fact, this land bank did not float. All present interest in this long-forgotten scheme centres in the fact that it contained the germ of modern financial expedients, and was, under slightly different forms, advocated by William Paterson, the founder of the Bank of England, and by John Law, who first gave a bank to France.

The latter celebrated Scotchman stands alone as a type of the speculator pure and simple. He was not a merchant like Paterson, a downright quack like Saint-Germain, or a gambler and intriguer like Casanova, but combined in a higher degree all these qualities. To begin with, John Law of Lauriston was a gentleman of landed property. His father, a man of good family, in the language of the day was a goldsmith—a trade which combined the functions of banking and exchange. Amassing a large fortune, he purchased the domains of Raudleston and Lauriston, the latter of which passed to his eldest son. On the side of his mother, Jean Campbell, he was descended from the celebrated house of Argyll. On the death of his father, John Law, he then aged fourteen, and his younger brother, William, were left to the care of their mother, who appears to have spared no pains in educating them as accomplished gentlemen of the time. John pursued his studies at Edinburgh, and made rapid progress in the "humanities," until the bent of his genius towards the exact sciences declared itself. So far as mathematical science had advanced he mastered it; and, moreover, studied with avidity its application to the principles of public and private credit, the state of trade and manufactures, the theory and practice of taxation, and, in short, all that was known of political economy. Born in 1671, young Law found himself, on coming of age, not only an elegant scholar and mathematician, but the best tennis-player and swordsman, the handsomest man, and the finest gentleman in Edinburgh. Apparently the earliest application of his aptitude for finance consisted in borrowing money to satisfy his elegant tastes, as we find him very shortly after making his début in London, conveying the fee of Lauriston to his mother, Jean Campbell, who undertook to pay his debts and preserve the property; all of which she did by degrees, and as rapidly as her son's continued demands for cash on account, and in advance, would permit her. In London, young Law's good looks, ready wit, and "noble" manner made him plenty of friends of both sexes. The handsome young Scotchman was ardently admired by the ladies of fashion, and made an excellent impression upon the wits and beaux of the Mall, who were enchanted at having found a gambler who never flinched nor lost his temper. Unfortunately for Law, one of his numerous intrigues led to a duel between him and a Mr. Edward Wilson, of Keythorpe, in Bloomsbury-square, on the 9th April, 1694, when Mr. Wilson was killed on the spot. The death of this gentleman, nicknamed Beau Wilson, occasioned unusual excitement. The trial lasted long, and Law's friends of quality stood by him staunchly; but for all that he was found guilty of murder, and sentence of death was passed on him on the 20th April, 1694. Justice having thus asserted itself, and public opinion being satisfied by the verdict of the jury, Law received a pardon from the crown; but an appeal being lodged by a brother of the deceased, he was detained in the King's Bench prison till the following January, when he escaped to the Continent. During the next few years he visited Amsterdam, Paris, Venice, Genoa, Florence, Naples, and Rome, studying by the way the commercial customs and finances of these places, and devoting particular attention to the great banks of Genoa and Amsterdam; but at this period of his life he was only potentially a financier, and really the greatest gambler in Europe. By calculating the chances at faro, and keeping the bank himself, he had succeeded in making gambling a very lucrative profession, his power of calculation and his imperturbable calmness giving him immense superiority over rash "punters," oppressed by the dream of breaking the bank. About the year 1700 he returned from exile and published his "Proposals and Reasons for constituting a Council of Trade" at Edinburgh in the following year. Encouraged by the success of this work, he, in 1705, offered to Parliament a plan for removing the difficulties under which Scotland then laboured from the great scarcity of specie. In his "Money and Trade Considered, with a Proposal for Supplying the Nation with Money," Law proceeds with a complete forecast of the Crédit Foncier schemes—the circulation of notes secured upon land. This scheme was, although it secured many followers, finally rejected by Parliament, the House passing a resolution "that to establish any kind of paper credit, so as to oblige it to pass, was an improper expedient for the nation." Disappointed at the evil reception of his most cherished schemes, Law, about 1707, forsook ungrateful Scotland and took up his quarters for some time at Brussels, where his success at play made him conspicuous. During two excursions made to Paris his good fortune was still more remarkable. He made a faro bank at the best houses—such as the Hôtel de Gesvres, Rue des Poulies, and at the houses of great financiers like Poisson, who lived in the Rue Dauphine, but his favourite haunt was the house of La Duclos, a tragic actress, then greatly in fashion. To the two first-named houses, whither he was invited to make a bank on festive occasions as a favour to both host and guest, he invariably took two bags of gold containing between them about a hundred thousand livres, representing, as this occurred before the coinage was finally debased, about seven thousand pounds sterling. Finding gold cumbrous in paying heavy stakes, Law had counters struck of the value of eighteen louis d'or each. The bank won heavily—so much, indeed, as to occasion an outcry of foul play, which even St. Simon, who loved neither the Duke of Orleans, his Scottish protégé, nor their ways, treats with contempt. The truth seems to have been that the Parisians were jealous of the foreigner of "noble manners," who won their ladies' hearts and their own money with such grace, elegance, and rapidity. The mean expedient familiar to Continental nations was resorted to, M. d'Argenson, lieutenant-general of police, ordering Mr. Law to leave Paris in twenty-four hours. He was in similar style hounded out of Genoa and Turin, and compelled to take refuge in Hungary and in Germany, where, for several years, he continued to accommodate persons of distinction by making a faro bank upon occasion. At the end of a few years of this life he had become the friend not only of the Duke of Orleans, but of the Grand Prior of Vendôme, who adored him, patronised him, and borrowed money of him with royal grace. The Prince de Conti, the Duke of Burgundy (grandson of Louis the Fourteenth), and Victor Amadeus, King of Sardinia, were also friends of the Chevalier, as Law was not unfrequently called. Hand in glove with these great personages, lending money to some, gambling and consorting with all, he was, when in his forty-fourth year he heard of the death of Louis the Fourteenth, one of the highest in favour with the Regent Orleans, and was, besides, possessed of what is far better than the favour of princes—a solid capital of one hundred and ten thousand pounds sterling.

While Law had been leading a joyous life elsewhere, France had been going to the dogs. The reign of Louis the Fourteenth — the sun which rose brightly enough from the mirk of the Fronde more than half a century before—had set amid gloom and penance, defeat and disaster, bankruptcy and beggary. During the last fourteen years of the old king's reign the expenses had absorbed two milliards eight hundred and seventy millions of livres, while the actual receipts had produced only eight hundred and eighty millions. The national debt, therefore, amounted to two milliards of livres, or about one hundred and forty-two millions sterling—an enormous sum for that period. Part of this amount had been consolidated in perpetual or life annuities, or paid in notes analogous to Exchequer bills. From these expedients arose a floating debt which, when the king died in 1715, formed an arrear of seven hundred and eleven millions of livres, while the deficit already incurred for the current year was seventy-eight millions. The treasury was empty. The salaries of public servants were so much in arrear that they stole more than ever, to make up the deficiency. Winter was only beginning, but people had already died of cold and hunger in Paris itself; while the famished provincials clamoured against a taxation which ground them to the earth. It was clear that something must be done, and the first suggestion was a national bankruptcy. This advice was abhorrent to the regent, and, after a stormy meeting of the council, it was determined that a revision of the State debts should take place. This, like most measures of a similar kind, signified a partial confiscation of the property of State creditors. Six hundred and fifty-two millions of debts were paid off with two hundred and fifty millions of state-notes, bearing interest at four per cent. This reduction, however, affords no adequate measure of the loss inflicted upon the holders of French securities, for, as the public had no guarantee against the abuse of "revision," the new securities fell the first day forty per cent.; so that, in the end, the possessor of a hundred francs in paper, on the death of Louis the Fourteenth, could not have got for its representative state-note more than twenty francs in specie. Other expedients were tried. It was attempted to derive a profit by debasing the coinage to the extent of forty-three per cent.; but this scheme proving a failure, it was determined to establish a "visa" or inspection into the means of those who had made fortunes out of the wars of the late reign. The "visa" was simply a revival of a good old custom of the dark ages. Scores of wealthy persons were arrested at once, and compelled to give an account of their dealings with the Government for the last twenty-seven years. An army of informers started into existence, and a gigantic spoliation took place. The men of business who had made immense fortunes by Government contracts, and especially by farming the taxes, had no friends. The people hated them as oppressors, and the nobility abhorred them for their wealth and sumptuous style of living, which threw dukes and peers of France into the shade. They were compelled to disgorge a portion of their wealth. Samuel Bernard, the great financial power of Europe, paid about six hundred thousand pounds in hard cash, and Crozat—of whom more anon—escaped for two-thirds of that sum; but, as is invariably the case, the big brass pots came off the best, the smaller earthen ones being, in many cases, broken up altogether. To satisfy the people—howling for victims—sundry unhappy peculators were put in the pillory; others immured in the Bastille. It was the old persecution of the Jews and Lombards over again. The brutal expedient was, however, a complete failure. Four thousand four hundred and ten persons were condemned in various amounts, descending as low as one thousand livres. The total amount squeezed out of them amounted—on paper—to two hundred and nineteen millions; but not the half of this sum ever reached the Exchequer. Every victim, who had a friend at court, applied for a remission of his fine to the lords or, better still, to the ladies in power. M. Crochut tells an amusing anecdote of an individual who, being fined twelve hundred thousand livres, received a visit from a nobleman who promised to have it cancelled for a perquisite of three hundred thousand. "Upon my honour, count," said the victim, "you have come too late; I have just made a bargain with the countess for half the money."

In the midst of this financial storm, Law appeared on the scene, not as a needy adventurer, eager to make something, but as the fortunate magician, whose touch converted all things into gold: as a philanthropist who, having all the wealth he coveted, was only anxious to serve France in general, and his friend the Regent in particular. As early as the 24th of October, 1715, only two months after the death of the old king, the plans of the reformer were submitted to the Council of the Regency. At this time they took the form of a Royal Bank, and were defeated by a majority of the Council. The Duke of Saint-Simon was one of their opponents. In his opinion, "An establishment of this sort may be good in itself; but it is only so in a republic or in a monarchy like England, whose finances are controlled by those alone who furnish them, and who only furnish so much as they please. But in a state which is weak, changeable, and more than absolute, like France, stability must necessarily be wanting to it; since a king, or in his name a mistress, a minister or favourite, or, still more, such extreme necessities as we find in the years 1707 to 1710, may overthrow the Bank—the temptation to which would be too great, and at the same time too easy."

Law was thus thrown out of his original plan of a National Bank, and fell back upon that of a private bank, composed entirely of funds subscribed by himself, and those who chose to share in the undertaking. Letters patent, authorising the formation of a "General Bank," were issued and registered by the Parliament in the month of May, 1716. The bank was immediately formed, with a capital of six millions, divided into twelve hundred shares of five thousand livres each, payable in four instalments, a fourth part in specie, and three-fourths in state-notes. All regulations were to be decided on at a general meeting of shareholders. The statutes of the bank only authorised it to issue notes payable at sight, and to the bearer; to discount commercial paper and bills of exchange; to receive on deposit money of private individuals; to make payments, minus a very small commission, and give receipts for merchants, either in money or by the transfer of account; and to supply, at the current rate of exchange, bills payable at sight on the managers of the mint in the French provinces, or on the principal bankers of foreign countries.

The shares were soon subscribed for. The favour of the Regent, and the advantage of a subscription accepted three-fourths in Government paper, attracted investors. Nevertheless, the bank was well laughed at to begin with. With some three or four hundred thousand livres in cash, a foreigner from distant Thule was about to revolutionise commerce. He was mad, of course, said the Parisian of that day, who, like his descendants, Adolphe and Auguste, being hopelessly ignorant, laughed at whatever he did not understand. But the laughers soon changed their tune. Law had seen that the chief obstacle to the recommencement of business was the frequent alteration of the coinage. How, asks M. Crochut again, could people deal on credit when they had to fear being paid in a depreciated money, with twenty or thirty per cent. less than the price agreed on? Law followed the practice of Amsterdam, and stipulated on his notes that the receipts and payments should be made according to the weight and standard of the day of their issue—that is to say, that silver being at forty livres the marc (two hundred and forty-five grammes) on the day of the issue of a note, it should be payable at the rate of forty livres the marc, whatever might afterwards be the intrinsic value of the coin. In this way bargains concluded in bank money entailed no chances which might ruin buyer or seller. The person who deposited in the bank a sum representing one hundred marcs of pure silver on the day of deposit, was certain to withdraw, whenever he pleased, one hundred marcs of pure silver—a security he would not have had with a notary. The advantage of having some fixed value as a medium for business at once struck the popular mind. Foreigners would only deal at bank value. Every man of business wished to have an account at the General Bank, and the demand for its paper against specie was so great that notes were no longer issued except at a premium. As specie poured into his coffers, Law undertook to discount good commercial securities at six, and afterwards at four, per cent. per annum, and contributed largely to the revival of commercial activity. Prosperity having settled on the Banque Générale, an extraordinary decree of the Council of State raised its credit to a still higher pitch. The agents entrusted with the management of the royal revenues were commanded to receive the bank notes, as money, in payment of all contributions, and to cash at sight and without discount such notes of the said bank as should be presented to them, to the extent of the funds they might have in hand. Thus the innumerable finance offices became so many branches of the Parisian Bank, whose success was so great that all the efforts of Law's enemies to discredit it proved failures. Counter schemes of land banks, on the very plan proposed long before in Scotland by Law himself, were brought forward by the Brothers Pâris-Duvernay. D'Argenson, who detested Law, depreciated the coinage at a stroke from forty to sixty livres the marc; the parliament of Paris resisted the financial measures of the Regent, and renewed the ordinances which forbade foreigners, under the severest penalties, from interfering in the management of the royal revenue. It was all in vain. The parliament of Paris was rapped on the knuckles, and told to mind its own business; and towards the end of 1718 the alliance between Law, the Regent, the Duc de Bourbon, and the Duc d'Antin became closer than ever, and prudent men already dreaded that a solid and substantial success might be expanded into a disaster, when, on the 4th of December, 1718, appeared a proclamation of the king, converting the General Bank into a Royal Bank, thus taking away from its engagements the limited, but real, guarantee of an actual capital, to substitute in its place the "indefinite but doubtful guarantee of an indebted state." To effect the change, the State bought out the original capitalists. On each share of five thousand livres only the first fourth had been paid up—to wit, three hundred and seventy-five livres in specie, and eleven hundred and twenty-five in bad paper. The reimbursement was made at par and in silver, so that the shareholder, who had never advanced the value of more than eight hundred livres in silver, actually received five thousand—about as good an investment as ever was made. So far, the plans of Law had been completely successful, but he was now about to complicate the Royal Bank with a plan for founding a company trading to the Western Indies, a famous but disastrous enterprise, which has passed into history as the Mississippi Scheme.

LETTERS AND LETTER-WRITERS.

POETS' LETTERS.

If all the letters that were ever written in the world (on wax tablet or parchment roll, honest Bath-post, or cream-laid note) were suddenly to rise or fall from earth, air, and fire, they would, it may fairly be computed, fill the great bed of the Atlantic, and even the memorable letters that Time has stored up in books would go far to choke up the Nile from its mouth to its source.

How many letters lie hidden even in such a fine old country library as that in which I now sit—letters of meeting and parting; of love and hatred; of folly and of wisdom; of joy and of sorrow! With what flower-juice some are written, with what heart's-blood others. What an odour of musk and gall are still perceptible in the divers inks! What feathers of strange birds have been used to inscribe them—a humming-bird's for Tom Moore's, a vulture's for Swift's! What different manners of writing—from Cromwell, who writes as if he were engraving on a plate of steel, to Walpole, who glides over satin paper as he dots down his scandal, wit, and gossip.

In the best of the letters of English poets that Time has hoarded, the writer can be seen as clearly as in a mirror; the mask he wore in daily life dropped from him as he penned the outspoken letter; the cynical frown the writer daily wore turns here to a gentle smile; the blot of the tear is still visible on the paper. We can see now whether the statesman wrote from the heart or not—whether the lover was pierced with the sweetly-poisoned dart, or had only received a passing flip from Cupid's bow-string. The truth in time oozes through the outer surface of a letter, and the vanity, hatred, or prejudice of the writer discloses itself. Time possesses the true tincture to stimulate the invisible ink, and by choosing specially good characteristic and eventful letters, we have the vanity to hope that we may render these articles so many little picture galleries, up and down which, for a few moments at least, the dead writer will pass as vividly as the hero of the hour passes in a showman's glass.

Let us begin by taking one or two of Gray's letters. From ordinary biographers we can gather little of Gray but what is disagreeable. The son of a money-scrivener on Cornhill, a rough, violent man, from whom his wife was compelled to separate, Gray led a melancholy and painful childhood. Enabled by his mother's toil, as a milliner, to go to Eton and Cambridge, he grew up a proud, precise, reserved scholar, shut up within himself and imprisoned among his books. He was disliked by the University men; and there is a story that the students of St. Peter's College got up a sham alarm of fire one night under his windows, to have the fun of seeing Gray the prig and the unsociable pedant let himself down from his window by a rope. Yet his letters are cheery and good-natured, and convey the impression of a clever, observant, amiable man. In them, too, we find an appreciation of scenery rare in writers of the time, and Gray was our first poet to discover the beauties of Cumberland, and the very spots in which Wordsworth afterwards so delighted.

One of Gray's most delightful letters was written to his old friend the Rev. Mr. Nicholls, a Suffolk rector. It shows a love of the picturesque, and a liveliness, hardly to be expected in so melancholy and solitary a man as Gray, and there is an absence of all self-consciousness or display. It has often been remarked that there has been a singular parallelism between our poets and our painters. The poetry of Thomson and Akenside corresponds to the painting of Wilson and the backgrounds of Reynolds. In both there is fine tone and a grand generalisation, but no minute knowledge and no appreciation of natural beauty in detail. Gray's landscapes in the following letters are, it is true, as broad as those of Wilson or of Thomson, but still there is a little of the toning tint and finish of later days.

"My health," writes Gray to his clerical friend, just after a tour which he had made to Southampton and Netley Abbey, "is much improved by the sea; not that I drank it or bathed in it as the common people do" (this is the precise, fastidious poet all over)—"no, I only walked by it and looked upon it. The climate is remarkably mild, even in October and November; no snow has been seen to lie there for these last thirty years past. The myrtles grow in the ground against the houses, and Guernsey lilies bloom in every window. The town—clean and well built, surrounded by its old stone walls, with their towers and gateways—stands at the point of a peninsula, and opens full south to an arm of the sea, which, having formed two beautiful bays on each hand of it, stretches away in direct view till it joins the British Channel. It is skirted on either side with gentle rising grounds, clothed with thick wood, and directly across its mouth rise the high lands of the Isle of Wight at some distance, but distinctly seen. In the bosom of the woods (concealed from profane eyes) lie hid the ruins of Netley Abbey. There may be richer and greater houses of religion, but the abbot is content with his situation. See there, at the top of that hanging meadow, under the shade of those old trees that bend into a half circle about it, he is walking slowly (good man!), and bidding his beads for the souls of his benefactors interred in that venerable pile that lies beneath him. Beyond it (the meadow still descending) nods a thicket of oaks that masks the building, and have excluded a view too garish and luxuriant for a holy eye; only on either hand they leave an opening to the blue glittering sea. Did you not observe how, as that white sail shot by and was lost, he turned and crossed himself to drive the tempter from him that had thrown that distraction in his way? I should tell you that the ferryman who rowed me, a lusty young fellow, told me that he would not for all the world pass a night at the abbey (there were such things near it), though there was a power of money hid there."

With how firm a touch Gray, in this pleasant letter, sketches Southampton, with its towers and gateways, and the distant Isle of Wight; with what quick vivacity of imagination he conjures up the abbot of Netley telling his beads for the souls of the benefactors to the abbey, and how well he turns off from this momentary dream to the stout, lusty young ferryman who believes in hidden treasures he is afraid to seek!

Gray's letters from Cumberland are equally simple, unaffected, and vivid. In his poetry he would have thought it necessary to generalise more; in prose he touches in a landscape, like Prout, without idealisation, but with a sensitive and true sense of artistic selection.

The subdued humour and fancy of Gray, says one of his critics, are perpetually breaking out in his letters with brief, picturesque touches, that mark the poet and man of taste.

Let us turn now to a greater and a healthier man. When Sir Walter Scott wrote his Lay of the Last Minstrel, he was farming at Ashestiel, and roving about among the farmers and shepherds, collecting old legends and scraps of old Scottish song. Honest Tom Purdie had just entered his service, and Mungo Park, the African traveller, was the constant companion of his mountain rides.

In the following letter Scott relates to his friend Morrit the way in which he wrote Waverley:—

"Abbotsford, July 24th, 1814.

* * * * *

". . . . . I had just proceeded thus far when your kind favour of the 21st reached Abbotsford. I am heartily glad you continued to like Waverley to the end. The hero is a sneaking piece of imbecility, and if he had married Flora, she would have set him up upon the chimney-piece, as Count Barowloski's wife used to do with him. I am a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so called, and I have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin Hood description. I do not know why it should be, as I am myself, like Hamlet, indifferent honest; but I suppose the blood of the old cattle-drivers of Teviotdale continues to stir in my veins.

"I shall not own Waverley; my chief reason is that it would prevent me of the pleasure of writing again. David Hume, nephew of the historian, says the author must be of a Jacobite family and predilections, a yeoman-cavalry man, and a Scottish lawyer, and desires me to guess in whom these happy attributes are united. I shall not plead guilty, however; and as such seems to be the fashion of the day, I hope charitable people will believe my affidavit in contradiction to all other evidence. The Edinburgh faith now is, that Waverley is written by Jeffrey, having been composed to lighten the tedium of his late Transatlantic voyage. So you see the unknown infant is like to come to preferment. In truth, I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me, as a clerk of session, to write novels. Judges being monks, clerks are a sort of lay brethren, from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected. So, whatever I may do of this kind, 'I shall whistle it down the wind and let it prey at fortune.' I will take care, in the next edition, to make the corrections you recommend. The second is, I believe, nearly through the press. It will hardly be printed faster than it was written; for though the first volume was begun long ago, and actually lost for a time, yet the other two were begun and finished between the 4th June and the 1st July, during all which I attended my duty in court, and proceeded without loss of time or hindrance of business.

"I am glad you are not to pay for this scrawl. Ever yours, WALTER SCOTT.

"P.S. I do not see how my silence can

be considered as imposing on the public. If I give my name to a book without writing it, unquestionably that would be a trick. But, unless in the case of his averring facts which he may be called upon to defend or justify, I think an author may use his own discretion in giving or witholding his name. Henry Mackenzie never put his name to a title-page till the last edition of his works; and Swift only owned one out of his thousand and one publications. In point of emolument, everybody knows that I sacrifice much money by withholding my name; and what should I gain by it, that any human being has a right to consider as an unfair advantage? In fact, only the freedom of writing trifles with less personal responsibility, and perhaps more frequently than I otherwise might do."

In 1805, just after Scott had been to the Lakes, and ascended Helvellyn, with Wordsworth, the latter poet wrote to Scott the following letter, containing a severe but just review of Dryden's poetry:—

"Paterdale, Nov. 7, 1805.

"My dear Scott,—I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden; not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine. I admire his talents and genius highly, but he is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are essentially poetical, are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this great command of language; that he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions—I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of 'Palamon and Arcite,' as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes, of classes of men or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination, must have necessarily followed from this; that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, whenever Virgil can be fairly said to have his eye upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage."

The letter from which the following is a quotation, is one addressed by Wordsworth, from Lucerne, to his kind friend the Earl of Lonsdale, during a tour in Switzerland in 1820. It is a description of Engelberg, and is full of that fine enthusiasm that grand scenery produced in the poet's mind:—

"We have visited the abbey of Engelberg, not many leagues from the borders of the lake of Lucerne. The tradition is, that the site of the abbey was appointed by angels singing from a lofty mountain that rises from the plain of the valley, and which, from having been thus honoured, is called Engelberg, or the Hill of the Angels. It is a glorious position for such beings, and I should have thought myself repaid for the trouble of so long a journey by the impression made upon my mind when I first came in view of the vale in which the convent is placed, and of the mountains that enclose it. The light of the sun had left the valley, and the deep shadows spread over it heightened the splendour of the evening light, and spread upon the surrounding mountains, some of which had their summits covered with pure snow; others were half-hidden by vapours rolling round them; and the rock of Engelberg could not have been seen under more fortunate circumstances, for masses of cloud, glowing with the reflection of the rays of the setting sun, were hovering round it, like choirs of spirits preparing to settle upon its venerable head."

The following letter of Wordsworth to his old friend Mr. Dyce is not only interesting for its story of the poor Cumberland poet, but also for its strongly expressed and hearty likes and dislikes disclosed to a brother of his own craft. Horace Walpole was a coxcomb, but there were other sides to him besides that:—

"Rydal Mount, March 20, 1833.

"My dear Sir,—I have to thank you for the very valuable present of Shirley's works just received. The preface is all that I have yet had time to read. It pleased me to find that you sympathised with me in admiration of the passage from the Duchess of Newcastle's poetry; and you will be gratified to be told that I have the opinion you have expressed of that cold and false-hearted Frenchified coxcomb, Horace Walpole.

"Poor Shirley! What a melancholy end was his! And then to be so treated by Dryden! One would almost suspect some private cause of dislike, such as is said to have influenced Swift in regard to Dryden himself.

"Shirley's death reminded me of a sad close of the life of a literary person, Sanderson by name, in the neighbouring county of Cumberland. He lived in a cottage by himself, though a man of some landed estate. His cottage, from want of care on his part, took fire in the night. The neighbours were alarmed; they ran to his rescue; he escaped, dreadfully burned, from the flames, and lay down (he was in his seventieth year), much exhausted, under a tree a few yards from the door. His friends, in the meanwhile, endeavoured to save what they could of his property from the flames. He inquired most anxiously after a box in which his manuscripts and published pieces had been deposited, with a view to a publication of a laboriously corrected edition; and, upon being told that the box was consumed, he expired in a few minutes, saying, or rather sighing out, the words, 'Then I do not wish to live.' Poor man! Though the circulation of his works had not extended beyond a circle of fifty miles' diameter, perhaps, at furthest, he was most anxious to survive in the memory of the few who were likely to hear of him.

"I am always pleased to hear from you; and believe me, my dear sir, faithfully your obliged friend, Wm. Wordsworth."

The letters of Byron do not display the poet in his worst moments or his best, but they have not the freshness and honest enthusiasm of Scott, the quiet enjoyment of Gray, or the tranquil piety of Wordsworth. There is a good deal of ill-temper, vanity, and self-discontent—an affectation of carelessness about his poems, and a good deal of the aristocratic superciliousness of those days concealed under a mask of vituperative radicalism. Still to certain favourite friends his letters are interesting, and some of the touches are especially characteristic. How he praises Shakespeare's Cleopatra as being so very womanly! And one likes to hear him speak with some kind regret of poor Sheridan:—

"November 16, 1813.

"Went last night with Lewis to see the first of Anthony and Cleopatra. It was admirably got up, and well acted—a salad of Shakespeare and Dryden. Cleopatra strikes me as the epitome of her sex—fond, lively, and tender, teasing, humble, haughty, beautiful, the devil!—coquettish to the last, as well with the asp as with Antony. After doing all she can to persuade him that—but why do they abuse him for cutting off the poltroon Cicero's head? Did not Tully tell Brutus it was a pity to have spared Antony? And did he not speak the Philippics? And are not 'words things?'—and such 'words' very pestilent 'things' too? If he had had a hundred heads, they deserved (from Antony) a rostrum (his was stuck up there) apiece; though, after all, he might as well have pardoned him for the credit of the thing. But to resume:—Cleopatra, after securing him, says, 'Yet go, it is your interest,' &c. How like the sex! And the questions about Octavia—it is a woman all over.

"To-day received Lord Jersey's invitation to Middleton—to travel sixty miles to meet Madame de Staël! I once travelled three thousand to get among silent people; and this same lady writes octavos and talks folios. I have read her books, like most of them, and delight in the last; so I won't hear it as well as read.

"Read Burns to-day. What would he have been if a patrician? We should have had more polish, less force, just as much verse, but no immortality, a divorce, and a duel or two; the which had he survived, as his potations must have been less spirituous, he might have lived as long as Sheridan, and outlived as much as poor Brinsley. What a wreck is that man! and all from bad pilotage; for no one had ever better gales, though now and then a little too squally. Poor dear Sherry! I shall never forget the day he and Rogers and Moore and I passed together, when he talked, and we listened, without one yawn, from six till one in the morning."

The following letter introduces us to Byron after the completion of Manfred. The wild desolation of the Wengern Alp seems to have inspired him to this grand conception of sorrow and remorse, and again he heaves a quiet sigh for Sheridan:—

"Venice, March 25, 1817.

* * * * *

"I have not the least idea where I am going or what I am to do. I wished to have gone to Rome, but at present it is pestilent with English: a parcel of staring boobies, who go about gaping and wishing to be at once cheap and magnificent. A man is a fool who travels even now in France or Italy till this tribe of wretches is swept home again. In two or three years the first rush will be over, and the Continent will be roomy and agreeable.

"I stayed at Venice chiefly because it is not one of their 'dens of thieves,' and here they but pause and pass. In Switzerland it was really noxious. Luckily, I was early, and had got the prettiest place on all the lake before they were quickened into motion with the rest of the reptiles. But they crossed me everywhere. I met a family of children and old women half-way on the Wengern Alp (by the Jungfrau) upon mules, some of them too old and others too young to be the least aware of what they saw.

"By-the-way, I think the Jungfrau and all that region of Alps, which I traversed in September—going to the very top of the Wengern, which is not the highest (the Jungfrau itself is inaccessible), but the best point of view—much finer than Mont Blanc and Chamouni, or the Simplon. I kept a journal of the whole for my sister Augusta, part of which she copied and let Murray see.

"I wrote a sort of mad drama for the sake of introducing the Alpine scenery in description, and this I sent lately to Murray. Almost all the dram. pers. are spirits, ghosts, or magicians, and the scene is in the Alps and the other world; so you may suppose what a Bedlam tragedy it must be. Make him show it you. I sent him all three sets piecemeal by the post, and I suppose they have arrived.

"I have now written to you at least six letters or letterets, and all I have received in return is a note about the length you used to write from Bury-street to St. James's-street, when we used to dine with Rogers and talk laxly, and go to parties, and hear poor Sheridan now and then. Do you remember one night he was so tipsy that I was forced to put his cocked hat on for him—for he could not—and I let him down at Brooks's much as he must since have been let down into his grave. Heigh ho! I wish I was drunk; but I have nothing but this d—d barley-water before me."

This letter of Byron's describes the commencement of Don Juan, of which he was evidently, even amid his reckless Venetian excesses, somewhat afraid. The Venetian woman he draws so finely shows where he obtained the models for his Gulnares, &c. The allusions at the end to his wife, and the attempt to prove madness, betray great agony of heart:—

"Venice, September 19, 1818.

* * * * *

"I have finished the first canto (a long one, of about one hundred and eighty octaves) of a poem in the style and manner of Beppo, encouraged by the good success of the same. It is called Don Juan, and is meant to be a little quietly facetious upon everything. But I doubt whether it is not—at least, as far as it has yet gone—too free for these very modest days. However, I shall try the experiment, anonymously; and if it don't take it will be discontinued. It is dedicated to Southey in good, simple, savage verse, upon the ——'s politics, and the way he got them. But the bore of copying it out is intolerable; and if I had an amanuensis he would be of no use, as my writing is so difficult to decipher.

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
  Divided in twelve books, each book containing,
With love and war, a heavy gale at sea—
  A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning.
New characters, &c. &c.

"The above are two stanzas, which I send you as a brick of my Babel, and by which you can judge of the text of the structure.

"I wish you a good-night with a Venetian benediction: 'Benedetto te, e la terra che ti fara!' ('May you be blessed, and the earth which you will make.') Is it not pretty? You would think it still prettier if you had heard it, as I did two hours ago, from the lips of a Venetian girl with large black eyes, a face like Faustine's, and the figure of a Juno—tall and energetic as a Pythoness, with eyes flashing, and her dark hair streaming in the moonlight—one of those women who may be made anything. I am sure, if I put a poniard into the hand of this one, she would plunge it where I told her—and into me if I offended her. I like this kind of animal, and am sure that I should have preferred Medea to any woman that ever breathed. You may, perhaps, wonder that I don't in that case. . . . . I could have forgiven the dagger or the bowl—anything but the deliberate desolation piled upon me when I stood alone upon my hearth, with my household gods shivered around me. . . . . Do you suppose I have forgotten it? It has, comparatively, swallowed up in me every other feeling; and I am only a spectator upon earth till a tenfold opportunity offers. It may come yet. There are others more to be blamed than ——, and it is on these that my eyes are fixed unceasingly."

The above glimpse of his strange life in Venice, and the splendid outburst at the end about his own home troubles, render this last-quoted letter of Byron's especially characteristic.

A YEAR'S VOLUNTEERING.

It makes a wonderful difference whether a disagreeable thing, to be done or suffered, happens to fall upon you or on me. If upon you, I support its evils with great equanimity. Are they remediable? Remedy them at your convenience, if you can; if not, "what can't be cured must be endured." If you like the line of life into which you have fallen, and mean to pursue it, do so without troubling me about its possible improvements. I don't like it; and I either contrive to escape it altogether, or to get out of it as soon as may be. It then becomes no business of mine.

But when I also am compelled to bear the little discomforts of which you complain, the case changes its aspect. I keenly feel every vexatious detail. I am ready to suggest and apply every practicable amelioration. I can cry out then as loudly as anybody else when the shoe pinches; point out exactly where the pinch is, and insist that the cause may be remedied without delay. And if everybody happen to be caught in the net from which everybody, or nearly so, would gladly escape, then are we all unanimous in denouncing whatever tends to render a hard necessity harder than need be. And not only we ourselves, but our united fathers, mothers, sweethearts, and wives are sharp-sighted to discover how to shorten the period of our servitude to duty, and to make it more endurable while it lasts.

Exactly this has been the case with respect to military service in France. The young men who fell to the conscription, and had not the means to buy a substitute, did as they could. So much the worse for them, if going a-soldiering did not please them. Those who could buy substitutes did so, except in the small minority of cases where there was a real vocation for a military career, or when a spoilt lad enlisted to spite his father and mother, who wouldn't let him marry the girl of his heart, or when the girl of his heart jilted him for somebody better looking, or —more likely accident—better off. In the last two contingencies, repentance soon followed; the dear boy returned to his disconsolate parents, kindly consenting to be redeemed from the ranks by the purchase of a remplaçant.

All that is changed at present. Every Frenchman (with a few inevitable exceptions) must now be a soldier for a longer or a shorter period. The "good" numbers now award the short (one year), the bad ones the long period (five years) of military service. Practically, both those periods are abbreviated, in the case of good conduct and rapid progress in drill.

The only mode, at present, of avoiding the chances of the Conscription (which, as we have seen, might assign to the drawer of a "bad" number a five-years' term of military service) is to forestall it by volunteering for a year. But it is not everybody who is in a position to do that—for, first, an examination has to be passed; and, secondly, the sum of fifteen hundred francs (sixty pounds sterling) has to be paid to the State. The two conditions imply both a better education and more affluent circumstances (or at least a greater willingness to part with spare cash), and therefore a higher social position, than are enjoyed by the mass of the people. Naturally, this privilege of the volontariat renders French society anxious to know what those who have experienced its working think of it. The desire has been met by the opportune publication of the "Journal d'un Volontaire d'un An au 10e de Ligne"* (already arrived at its sixth edition), in which its author, M. René Vallery-Radot, recorded nearly every evening the smallest detail of his regimental life. The united record forms a complete and exact picture of a Volunteer-for-a-Year's condition.

Volunteering in France differs widely not only from volunteering in England, but also from volunteering in Prussia, where it is a purely military institution. The volunteer pays the State a sum of from sixty to eighty-two francs for his equipment. His board and lodging are at his own expense. As soon as he is outside the barracks, he is as much his own master as a student returning to his room in town. The object is to make officers and subalterns for the landwehr. In every regiment, the volunteers form a little group of collegians under the surveillance of an officer. When they are more than twenty, they have two officers to instruct and keep an eye upon them. In two months they are taught how to handle their arms and the material details of military service; then they have to draw up reports, and to direct patrols and reconnoitring parties. They are expected to know theoretically all infantry, cavalry, and artillery exercises. At the end of ten or twelve months, they pass an examination and receive their certificate of officer of the landwehr.

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* Paris. J. Hetzel et Cie., 18, Rue Jacob. Prix: 3 fr.

In France, the volunteer is not a student who puts on a uniform for three or four hours a day, in order to learn how a patrol marches, how an outpost is placed, and how requisitions are made in an enemy's country. After exercise or errands he enters the messroom or the dormitory, a real soldier, undistinguished from the other soldiers. Prussia regards the volontariat from an exclusively military point of view; France looks upon it both in a military and a social light. Prussia, moreover, is aristocratic, while France is democratic. Any difference in their treatment would cause French soldiers to regard volunteers as a knot of little favourites and protégés. What pleases them in the volontariat, is the idea of absolute equality (except the fifteen hundred francs) between rich and poor, students and farm labourers. From this equality a good feeling may spring up between the bourgeois of the Boulevard Haussmann and the artisan of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. From the first moment of their meeting in uniform, they must be comrades, and not superiors and inferiors.

All this is very taking in theory, like the schemes of model republics drawn up by politicians of the irreconcileable and non possumus class; but an episode related by our volunteer proves that this attempted amalgamation of ranks and races does not infallibly work well. One of his comrades, neither wrong-headed nor heartless, but somewhat weak in character, was the wag of the whole band on his arrival. He affected the airs of a veteran trooper, and told guard-house stories in such racy style that no one could help laughing at them. At first, he came regularly every evening to their hut, "to keep up their spirits," as he said. Gradually his visits became less frequent. Sometimes he was busy disposing of the rubbish as a punishment; sometimes kept within-doors by a "consigne," or shut up in the "salle de police." He had made an enemy of his corporal by turning him into ridicule one unlucky day. This personage, snappish and revengeful, watched every opportunity of catching the other in fault; and, from morning till night, punishments and coarse speeches followed each other as fast as might be.

Were they exercising, at the first undecided movement, he was nothing but a clumsy brute, consigned for four-and-twenty hours. At roll-call, he had always "shuffled on his clothes like an Auvergnat." Under pretext of putting his uniform in order, the corporal shook him, and pulled him about like a doll. On Sunday, if, by chance, the volunteer had a leave of absence till ten o'clock, the corporal would stop him at the threshold of his hut to undergo a minute examination. For a badly-tied cravat or an unsteady button he made him miss the train and lose his holiday. Every imaginable vexation was perseveringly inflicted. The poor fellow laughed at it at first; then got out of temper, made his complaint, to which no attention was paid, and then lost courage. "My cocksparrow volunteer for a year shall have two years of it," often muttered the corporal.

A short digression is called for here. There are four sorts of regimental punishments: the "consigne," or prohibition to stir out of doors; the "salle de police," or confinement in the place (not luxurious) assigned to that purpose; prison; and the cell. You get two or three days of "consigne" for a shoe-heel badly blacked, a page of "théorie" imperfectly learned, or a missing button. The "salle de police" opens its dingy door in graver cases—forgetfulness of some regulation, a look askance at a corporal, a misplaced word. One day, le caporal Canard (in English, Corporal Duck) said to one of his men who was seated: "Stand up." "Quack!" was the reply. "Do you hear me?" "Quack!" again. "You refuse to obey?" "Quack!" Corporal Canard immediately wrote this billet-doux: "Thomas, soldier of the second class, punished with two days of salle de police (on the order of Corporal Canard) for having, when his corporal told him to rise, refused by imitating three times successively the cry of that animal?" Even Dogberry, corporal, must be respectfully obeyed.

A corporal cannot inflict more than two days of "salle de police;" a sergeant has the right to order four; but both corporal and sergeant, when out of humour, have always the resource of getting the ration augmented by the captain. Prison is the usual lot of jolly dogs who have left their good sense at the bottom of a bottle, and made a row in the dormitory. Since the law against drunkenness, punishments have been made exceedingly severe, and drunkards are much less common. Drunkenness is no longer considered as an indisposition to be nursed, but as a fault to be chastised. All cantiniers are forbidden to sell absinthe. To the military laws, put into every soldier's hands, is added by way of postscript: "In no case shall drunkenness be invoked as an extenuating circumstance." The troopers, consequently thus put upon their guard, dilute, figuratively, their wine with a little water, while celebrating the arrival or the departure of a "pays."* With many, certainly, sobriety is the daughter of poverty; but many also have not that restraint to compel good behaviour. Prison régime is far from pleasant, with only a single blanket for bedding. In the cell there is nothing but the plank. An insulting speech or a threatening gesture to an officer or a corporal, sticks a man into the cell, where half a ray of light enters through a window as large as your hand; three raised boards play the part of bed; a bit of bread, and a morning broth without vegetables or meat, for food; no books, and worse, no air.

Now, in addition to their other privileges, the year's volunteers have to pass an examination every three months, and at the end of their year a final examination on all the topics comprised in their course of training. Every volunteer who answers insufficiently at this last examination, or who, in the course of the year, has been punished either by fifteen days of prison or thirty days of "salle de police," shall serve a second year under the same conditions as the first, except the payment of fifteen hundred francs. At the expiration of the second year, if he is plucked again, or has incurred the maximum of punishment, he loses all his advantages, being no longer considered as a volunteer, but as a common soldier who still has his three years of service before him.

To gratify his malice, therefore, the corporal in question had only to contrive to inflict on his victim thirty days of "salle de police," and he generally found some opportunity once a week. Not one grave offence was imputed to him; it was always for the merest trifle that the volunteer was punished. His gaiety and lightheartedness vanished; he became depressed and sombre, hardly answering the questions addressed to him, and evidently possessed by a fixed idea. During his leisure hours he lay stretched on his mattress without uttering a word, his eyes fixed on the ceiling. The corporal in his corner, like a spider in his web, watched for the slightest movement that could put the other in his power.

The twenty-ninth day of "salle de police" was inflicted on the volunteer for a strap of a knapsack badly cleaned. Next day he failed to appear at the roll-call. At the end of the week he was set down as a deserter. His comrades knew not what to think. At last one of them received a letter bearing the Geneva postmark.

"Yes, my friend, I have deserted, and have before me thirty years of exile. I should not have shrunk from a field of battle, and yet I took fright at another year's volunteering. I would have borne all the privations and miseries of a campaign, but I could not resign myself to undergo the vexations and insults of a malicious boor. Do not fancy I have done this in a sudden fit of passion. My flight was planned long ago. I got from home a coarse linen jacket and trowsers, pretending that I wanted them for gymnastic exercises. With these on I started, in pinching cold, at the close of November. I went by Pontarlier. At the frontier a gendarme asked to see my papers. I had in my pocket my two diplomas of Bachelor of Letters and of Law. I mentioned the name of a relation at Geneva whom I was going to visit. The gendarme, poring over my diplomas, did not notice that I trembled like a culprit and was as pale as a wretch going to the guillotine. I am out of his reach now. I make no attempt to describe all I feel. I am at the same time glad and full of shame."

But better feeling is often manifested in that terrible "mixture," the present French army, combined also with curiosity respecting the new arrivals. Their lieutenant soon stuck them with their backs against a wall, side by side with working-men from Belleville and La Glacière, with Auvergnats and Savoyards, numbered them, and classed them according to their height. Vallery-Radot's bed stood by chance between those of two other volunteers, a sculptor and an apothecary's pupil, with whom he was quickly on the best of terms. The sculptor at once modelled his caricature, and the apothecary offered the use of all his drugs. The druggist's left-hand neighbour was a devout, perhaps superstitious, Breton, whose breast under his shirt was covered with blessed medals, bronze and silver, and scapularies, brown and blue. The sculptor's right-hand neighbour, born at La Guillotière, had his arm tattooed with a lion shaking his chains, and under it the legend, "The awakening of the people." Two brothers, the sons of a colonel, sleep between the lamplighter and the under-cook. A notary's son had a foundling beside him. Opposite was a married soldier, the father of a family, whose wife, lodging in a cottage at Avor, washed the volunteers' linen, for they were allowed to keep their shirts and flannel waistcoats. Socks even were tolerated.

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* Dictionaries don't tell us everything. Bellows', one of the best of French and English, gives "Pays—country; province; home; native place." Whence, in familiar French, "un pays" means a fellow-villager. By taking still further liberties with the word and giving it a feminine termination, it becomes "une payse," a girl belonging to one's own neighbourhood—videlicet, a sweetheart.

All the volunteers are not bacheliers ès lettres or bacheliers ès sciences; the majority had undergone at the Hôtel-de-Ville an examination in commerce, agriculture, manufactures—a sort of half-open door, through which they contrived to creep in. One of their first amusements was, standing half-dressed at the foot of their mattresses, to take and recite by turns the position of the soldier under arms: the heels on the same line and as close together as the conformation of the individual permits; the feet forming something less than a right angle and pointing outwards equally; the knees straight, without stiffness; the body resting on the haunches, and slightly inclined forwards; the shoulders well back and on the same level; the arms hanging naturally; the elbows close to the body: the palm of the hand slightly turned outwards; the little finger behind the seam of the pantaloon; the head erect, but not uncomfortably so; the eyes fixed straight in front.

"Previous to this conditional position for a year," said a voice with a southern accent, "what was the position of each of us at home? For my own part, I got a little way into law books, and a great way into debt."

"I was at the School of Fine Arts."

"I was at the School of Pharmacy."

"And I was at the School of Truants."

"My father was a watchmaker. I solicit your custom whenever your watches get out of order."

"And I beg to furnish you with chains and rings next year. My master was a jeweller."

"When you want a little music, you have only to speak," said an artistic head, showing a violin.

"A pair of boots will be more useful," shouted a loud voice. "I am a shoemaker."

"Suppose, meanwhile, we have a game of loto," interrupted the corporal, an artisan from Belleville, with spindle shanks, fierce black eyes, and a facility of expression more emphatic than courteous.

Volunteers who arrived in bottines from the Boulevard des Italiens or in slippers from a workshop or a counter, conscripts in wooden shoes from a farm in Brittany, plasterers, stonecutters, all assembled round the table holding the number-bearing cards in their hands. An old soldier shook the bag, illustrating every number, as he drew it, with some souvenir or picturesque image.

"Seventeen! The age of all payses. Twenty-one! The little conscript. Ten! The flag of our regiment. Thirty-one! Day without bread; starvation in Prussia."

"What do you mean by that?" a volunteer inquires.

"I mean that in Prussia we were only allowed thirty rations per month, and that when the month had thirty-one days, on the thirty-first we had to rub our stomachs. Twenty-four! The bright louis of France"—the old louis d'or, of four-and-twenty francs—"Eighty-nine! Our eighty-nine departments."

Whenever this number happened to be drawn, a voice never failed to cry, "But we have only eighty-six now!" To which all the other voices replied, "We will have them back again, our eighty-nine departments!"

On one of the dormitory walls an officer had drawn the map of France, and marked the new frontier with a broad black line, so that from morning till night they had before their eyes the sight of this slice lopped off from France. Ramrod in hand they pointed out to each of their peasant comrades his own department, his own subprefecture, his own cantonal chief town. But from the depths of Auvergne, Brittany, or Savoy, they always got back to Alsace and Lorraine; for there were two Lorrainers and one Alsacian in their company, to welcome whom an old soldier sang the touching ballad of The Alsacian Schoolmaster, the others joining in the burden of the song, while they smarten up their knapsacks, wash the window-panes, dust the bread-shelf, or give right and left triumphant strokes of the broom. All that kind of work—cleaning the walls, scrubbing the floor, polishing the pots and pans—the volunteers are obliged to do. Nothing amuses the sons of peasants and workmen so much as to see their betters brooming or pumping in coarse wooden shoes, carrying on their heads forty pounds of bread or meat, or tottering under the load of a hundred pounds of potatoes. "It is your turn now!" the others shouted, every time the Belleville corporal sent them to fetch water from the river or to sweep out the sergeants' room. But this very natural sentiment was gradually succeeded by feelings of sympathy and good-fellowship. One morning a Breton stepped up to our volunteer and took the broom out of his hands.

"Leave that alone," he said; "it is no acquaintance of yours."

"We shall become acquainted."

"Give it to me. This evening you will write for me a letter to la payse."

And in the evening, by the light of a candle stuck in a potato, he wrote, from the worthy lad's dictation, two pages to his parents and four to his payse; requesting, of the parents a little money, of the payse a great deal of love, and sticking the whole into the same envelope. Meanwhile, the old soldiers smoked their pipes round the stove; the watchmaker mended a corporal's watch; the apothecary put his phials in order; several volunteers taught conscripts to read; and the violonist, standing on a bed, played, "Ah, quel plaisir d'être soldat!"

Here is fraternity, but not the equality of ultra republican and revolutionary theorists. By a thousand little traits the French are constantly showing that, much as they like the former, they care nothing about the latter, except equality before the law. Even between brothers in the same family there may be fraternity, but not equality. As to liberty, all depends on what it means: whether freedom from injustice and oppression, or freedom to pillage, burn, and murder.

Young men who submit to a year's volunteering cannot be said to be unreasonable on that score. In fact, after reading M. Vallery-Radot's book (which, it will be seen, is well worth perusal), one may doubt whether a young Frenchman, in whatever class of society, had not better run all the risks of the conscription than engage as a volunteer for a year.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Miss Chubb could keep a secret. She was proud of being entrusted with one. She was much gratified when Rhoda Maxfield, on the Monday after Diamond's proposal, called at the maiden lady's modest lodgings, and confided to her the fact that Mr. Diamond had asked her to marry him, and that she had accepted him subject to her father's consent. It may seem strange that Rhoda should have chosen to make this confidence to Miss Chubb, rather than to Mrs. Errington, or to Minnie Bodkin, with both of whom she was more intimate. But she told Miss Chubb that she wanted her help.

"My help, my dear! I'm sure I don't know how I can help you. But if I can I will. And I congratulate you sincerely. I've seen how it would be all along. You know I told you that a certain gentleman was falling over head and ears in love, a long time ago. Didn't I, now?"

Rhoda acknowledged that it was so; and then she said that she had come to ask a great favour. Would Miss Chubb mind saying a word or two on Mr. Diamond's behalf to her father? "Father told me this morning, after breakfast, that he should make some inquiries about Mr. Diamond. I'm quite sure that nothing will come out that is not honourable to him; I am not the least afraid of that. And I believe Dr. Bodkin will praise him very highly, but he will not perhaps say the sort of things that would please father most. He will tell him what a good scholar he is, and all that, but he will never think of making father understand that Mr. Diamond is looked upon as being as much a gentleman as he is himself. Gentlefolks like Dr. Bodkin take those things for granted. But father would like to be told them. He thinks so very much of my marrying above my own class—for, of course, I have learnt enough to know that Mr. Diamond belongs to a different sort of people from mine."

"I understand, my dear," returned Miss Chubb, nodding her head shrewdly. "And you may depend on my doing my best, if I have the chance. But I'm afraid it is not likely that Mr. Maxfield will consult me on the subject."

"I told him to come to you. Father knows you are one of the few people with whom Mr. Diamond has associated in Whitford."

"Why don't you send him to Mrs. Errington? Oh, I forgot! Your father and she are two." Miss Chubb laughed to cover a little confusion on her own part; for she guessed that Rhoda might have other reasons for not asking Mrs. Errington's testimony in favour of her suitor. Then she added, quickly, "Or Minnie Bodkin, now! Minnie's word would do more with your father than mine would. And Minnie and Mr. Diamond are such cronies. You had better send him to Minnie."

"No, thank you."

"But why not? Good gracious, she is the very person!"

"No, I think not. We don't wish it known until father has given his decided consent. I have only told you in confidence, Miss Chubb."

"But—if the doctor knows it, Minnie must know it! And if I know it, why shouldn't she?"

"No, thank you. I don't want to ask Miss Minnie about it."

"I wonder why that is, now!" pondered Miss Chubb, when Rhoda was gone. And very probably Rhoda could not have told her why.

Old Maxfield duly paid his visit to Miss Chubb. The good-natured little woman waited at home all day, lest she should miss him. And about an hour after her early dinner Mr. Maxfield sent in his respects, and would be glad to have a word with her, if she were at leisure.

"I hope you will overlook the intrusion, ma'am," said Maxfield, standing up with his hat in his hand, just inside the door of the little sitting-room, where Miss Chubb asked him to walk in.

"No intrusion at all, Mr. Maxfield! I'm very glad to see you. Please to sit down."

He obeyed, and holding his thick stick upright before him, and his hat on his knees, he thus began:

"I'm not a-going to waste your time and mine with vain and worldly discourse, ma'am. I am a man as knows the value of time, thanks be! And I have a serious matter on my mind. You know my daughter Rhoda?"

"I know Rhoda, and like her, and admire her very much."

"Yes; Rhoda is a girl such as you don't see many like her. There's a young man seeking her in marriage."

"I'm not surprised at that!"

"No; there has been several others too. But she gave 'em no encouragement; nor should I have been willing that she should. Some of them was persons in my own rank of life, and that would not do for Rhoda."

"I think you are quite right there, Mr. Maxfield. Rhoda is naturally very refined, and she has associated a good deal with persons of cultivated manners. I don't think Rhoda would be happy if she were obliged to give up certain little graces of life, which a great many excellent people can do without perfectly well."

Maxfield nodded approvingly. "You speak with a good deal of judgment, ma'am," said he, with the air of a recognised authority on wisdom. "But it isn't only that. Rhoda will have money—a great deal of money—more than some folks that holds their head very high ever had or will have. Now it is but just and rightful that I should expect her husband to bring some advantages in return."

"Of course. And—ahem!—I'm sure you are too sensible a man not to consider that the best thing a husband could bring in exchange would be an honest, loving heart, and a real esteem and respect for your daughter."

Little Miss Chubb became quite fluttered after making this speech, and coloured as if she had been a girl of eighteen.

"Not at all," returned old Max decisively. "The loving heart and the esteem and respect are due to my Rhoda if she hadn't a penny. In return for her fortin' I expect something over and above."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Chubb, a good deal taken aback.

"Now I don't feel sure that the young man in question has that something over and above. It is Mr. Matthew Diamond, tutor at the Grammar School in this town."

"A most excellent young man! And, I'm sure, most devotedly in love with Rhoda."

"But very poor, and not of much account in the world, as far as I can make out."

"Oh, don't say that, Mr. Maxfield! He is proud and shy, and has kept himself aloof from society because he chose to do so. But he would be a welcome guest anywhere in the town or county. Young Mr. Pawkins, of Pudcombe Hall, quite courts him; he is always asking him to go over there."

Thus much and more Miss Chubb valiantly spoke on behalf of Matthew Diamond, in his character of Rhoda's wooer. And then she expatiated on the excellent position he would hold as master of Dorrington School. It was such a "select seminary;" and so many of the first county people sent their boys there. "Dear me," said Miss Chubb, "it seems to me to be the very position for Rhoda! Not too far from Whitford, and yet not too near—of course she couldn't keep up all her old acquaintances here, could she?—and altogether so refined, and scholastic, and quiet! And really, Mr. Maxfield, see how everything turns out for the best. I thought at one time that young Errington was very much smitten with Rhoda; but, if she had taken him, you wouldn't have been so satisfied with her position in life now, would you? With all his talent and connection, see what a poor place he has of it! Mr. Diamond has done best, ten to one."

This was a master-stroke, and made a great impression on old Max. Not that the latter even now was at all dazzled by the prospect of having the head-master of Dorrington School for his son-in-law. But Miss Chubb's allusion did suffice to show him that the world would consider Diamond to be a triumphantly successful man in comparison with Errington.

"Oh, him!" said Maxfield in a tone of bitter contempt. "No; such as him was not for Miss Maxfield. And I'll tell you, moreover, that I don't know but what she's throwing herself away more or less if she takes this other. She's a great catch for him; I know the world, and I know that she is a great catch. But I've felt latterly one or two warnings that my end is near——"

"Dear me, Mr. Maxfield! Don't say so! I'm sure you look very hearty!" exclaimed Miss Chubb, much startled by this cool announcement.

"That my end is near," repeated old Max doggedly, "and I wish to set my house in order, and see my daughter provided for, before I go. And she seems to be contented with this young man. Rhoda ain't just easy to please. It might be a long time, if ever, before she found some one to suit her so well."

Miss Chubb was a little shocked at this singularly prosaic and unemotional way of treating the subject of love and marriage, as to which she herself preserved the most romantic freshness of ideas. She would have liked the young couple to be like the lovers in a story-book, and the father to bestow his daughter and his blessing with tears of joy. However, she did her best to encourage Mr. Maxfield in giving his consent after his own fashion, and they parted on excellent terms with each other.

"That dry old chip, Jonathan Maxfield, has been to me to-day," said Dr. Bodkin after dinner to his wife and daughter. "He came to ask me what prospect I thought Diamond had of getting the mastership of Dorrington, explaining to me that Diamond was a suitor for his daughter's hand. It took me quite by surprise. Had you any inkling of the matter, Minnie?"

"Oh yes, papa."

"Dear me! Well, women see these things so quickly! H'm! Well, Master Diamond has shown good taste, I must say. That little Rhoda is the prettiest girl I know. And such a sweet, soft, lovable creature! I think she's too good for him."

"It is a singular thing, but I have remarked very often that men in general are apt to think pretty girls too good for anybody but themselves!"

The doctor frowned, and then smiled. "Have you so, saucebox?" he said.

"I don't know about her being too good for him," said Mrs. Bodkin, in her quick, low tones; "but I suppose he knows very well what he is about. Old Maxfield has feathered his nest very considerably. It will be a very good match for a poor man like Matthew Diamond."

Mrs. Bodkin had for some time past exhibited symptoms of dislike to Diamond. She never had a good word for him; she even was almost rancorous against him at times, although she seldom allowed the feeling to express itself in words before her daughter. Minnie understood it all very well. "Poor mother!" she thought to herself, "she cannot forgive him. I wish I could persuade her that there is nothing to forgive. How could he help it if I was a fool?" Yet the mother and daughter had never exchanged a word on the subject. And Minnie comforted herself with the conviction that her mother was the only person in the world who guessed her secret. "Mamma has a sixth sense where I am concerned," said she to herself.

"I hope you said a good word for the lovers to Mr. Maxfield, papa," she said aloud, in a clear, cheerful voice.

"I had not much to say. I told him that I thought Diamond stood a good chance of getting Dorrington School."

"When will it be known positively, papa?"

"About Dorrington? Oh, before Christmas. I should say by the end of the first week in December. Diamond will be a loss to me, but I shall be glad of his promotion. He's a gentleman, and a very good fellow, although his manner is a trifle self-opinionated. And," added the doctor, shaking his head and lowering his voice as one does who is forced to admit a painful truth, "I am sorry to say that his views as to the use of the Digamma are by no means sound."

"Perhaps Rhoda won't find that a drawback to her happiness!" said Minnie, laughing her sweet, musical laugh.

"Probably not, Puss!"

Then the Rev. Peter Warlock and Mr. Dockett dropped in. A whist-table was made up in the drawing-room. The doctor and Mr. Dockett won three rubbers out of four against Mrs. Bodkin and the curate. And the latter — being seated where he could command a full view of Minnie as she reclined near the fire with a book — made two revokes, and drew down upon himself a very severe homily and a practical lecture or short course on the science of whist, illustrated by all the errors he had made during the evening, from Dr. Bodkin. For the doctor, although he liked to win, cared not for inglorious victory, and was almost as indignant with his opponents as with his partner for any symptom of slovenly play. The Reverend Peter's brow grew serious, even to gloom, and it seemed to him as if the doctor's scolding were almost more than human patience could endure. "I don't mind losing my sixpences," thought the curate, "and I could make up my mind to sacrificing an hour or two over those accursed," (I'm afraid he did mentally use that strong expression!) "those thrice-accursed bits of pasteboard. But to be lectured and scolded at into the bargain——!" He arose from the green table with an almost defiant sullenness.

However, when the tray was brought in and the victimised gentleman had comforted his inner man with hot negus, and was at liberty to sip it in close proximity to Miss Bodkin's chair, and had received one or two kind looks from Miss Bodkin's eyes, and several kind words from Miss Bodkin's lips, his heart grew soft within him, and he began to think that even six, ten—a dozen rubbers of whist with the doctor would not be too high a price to pay for these privileges! Then they talked of Diamond's engagement to Rhoda—it had been spoken of all over Whitford hours ago!—and of his prospects. And Mr. Warlock was quite effusive in his rejoicings on both scores. He had been dimly jealous of Minnie's regard for Diamond, and was heartily glad of the prospect of getting rid of him. Mr. Dockett, too, seemed to think the match a desirable one. He pursed up his mouth and looked knowing as he dropped a mysterious hint as to the extent of Rhoda's dowry. "I made old Max's will myself," said he; "and, without violating professional secrecy, I may confirm what I hear old Max bruits abroad at every opportunity—namely, that he is a warm man—a very warm man in—deed! But I'm sure Mr. Diamond is a young man of sound principles, and will make the girl a good husband. And it is decided promotion for her too, you know. A grocer's daughter! Eh? I'm sure I wish them well most sincerely." And shall we blame Mr. Dockett if, in his fatherly anxiety, he rejoiced at the removal of a dangerous rival to his little Ally, on whom young Pawkins had recently bestowed a good deal of attention, whenever Rhoda Maxfield was out of the way?

"I never knew such a popular engagement," said Doctor Bodkin, innocently. "Everybody seems to approve! One might almost fear it could not be a case of true love, it runs so very smooth. There does not appear to be a single objection."

"Except the Digamma, papa!"

"Except the Digamma!" echoed the doctor merrily. And when he was alone with his wife that night, he remarked to her that he was immensely thankful to see the great improvement in their beloved child this winter.

"Minnie is certainly stronger," said the mother.

"And in such excellent spirits!" said the father.

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK I. CHAPTER II. A GOOD SAMARITAN.

Mrs. Pemberton recovered from her fainting fit to find herself in her sleeping apartment, lying on her bed with the windows and doors set open, a cool air filling the room, and a kindly well-known face bending over her. The sense of hearing returned to her before she could open her eyes, and she heard Dr. Gray speaking to John Pemberton, who was standing at a little distance. The physician's fingers were on her wrist.

"She is coming round; the pulse is perceptible. Has she been ill, that she has felt this such a shock?"

"Not ill exactly, but not quite herself of late. Excited and upset about our going home, I fancy."

"Ah, that's it, no doubt. She will be all right soon, but she must be kept quiet; she is very low. No excitement and no fatigue for the present. There, the faintness is going off. Lie still now," he said to his patient, "and don't attempt to speak. You have been just a little weak, but it is nothing."

All her consciousness was returning now, and she trembled from head to foot.

"Chilly?" said the doctor. "Put that quilt over her, Pemberton. Now for the wine. That's it. You'll do now, and I must go back to our friend in the study. You had better sit by her, and I will come again presently."

Mrs. Pemberton lay with her eyes closed, as her husband noiselessly took the doctor's place; but now the blood was rushing to her head and heart, singing in her ears, and throbbing all over her body. Every moment's silence was an age of pain to her, and yet she dared not, could not, speak. But when John Pemberton took her hand, its fingers closed round his, and she whispered:

"Tell me!"

"About the poor fellow? I will, dear. It is not so bad as you thought; he is not dead, though I don't wonder you believed he was, for he looked like it. But it is a bad business at the best, for Gray says he has fever; that he must have been ill for some days, and, of course, such an accident is not likely to improve his chances."

"Fever!" said Mrs. Pemberton, now opening her eyes, and fixing them, full of alarm, upon her husband. "Fever!"

"Yes, indeed, love. It is fever, and of a bad kind. And he cannot be moved, even if we would do such a thing, for there is an injury to his spine, and moving him would kill him."

"My God! My God!" moaned his wife, and tossed her hands wildly on the coverlet.

"You must not do that, Mary. You must keep quiet, or we shall have you ill too. And there's no need to be so much alarmed. Gray does not think the fever is of an infectious kind; but we can send Ida away at once, with Stepney, to lodgings in Randwick, if it will make your mind easier."

Ida! And Mary Pemberton had forgotten the girl's existence!

"I will ask Gray about it, and, if he thinks well of it, she can be off in the morning. She has not been in the room at all, and was at the door as they carried him in, only for a moment. Mr. Dale asked for brandy, and she ran away to fetch it at once. So there's really no fear, you see. Are you feeling faint again, Mary?"

"No," she said, with a desperate effort at composure; "but I don't quite understand. "Who is Mr. Dale?"

"Drink this," he put a glass of wine to her lips, "and keep still, and I will tell you all that has occurred. It is an unfortunate thing, but we must meet it as well as we can. This poor fellow's name, it seems, is Edward Randall, and he has been a year at Goulburn; but he has been out of health, and was going to Sydney on his way to England. Mr. Dale knew him slightly—he has just come up from Melbourne—and recognised him on the coach. Randall told him he had been very ill, and hardly felt as if he should get to his journey's end; and Mr. Dale very kindly remained, when the accident occurred, to see what really had happened, and to give such help as he could. It is very embarrassing, not as to their being here, of course, but about what's to be done if the matter terminates fatally, as Gray seems to think it must."

A knock at the door interrupted him. He rose and answered the knock in person. A servant stood at the door, and John Pemberton went out into the corridor to hear his message.

"That was Richard," said John Pemberton, coming noiselessly back, and reseating himself by her side; "he came to tell me that they had had the sense to take the luggage belonging to the two gentlemen out of the coach, and Perry has brought it up to the house. I did not remember anything about it; but that is one little difficulty out of the way. We shall find out, from Mr. Randall's papers, if he should not be able to tell us himself, where and who his friends are, and thus we can communicate with them."

"Had you not better go and ascertain at once?" Her pale lips could hardly form the words.

"No, love, I could not leave you, until Gray returns; time enough then."

"What—what are they doing for—him?"

"All that can be done. It will be a case of watching, chiefly, and Gray will take the carriage back, and send out a nurse, with all the medicines and other things that will be necessary."

"And he is to stay here—here, in your house, to suffer here, to die here!"

The horror in her voice alarmed John Pemberton.

"Pray don't agitate yourself so much, Mary," he said, earnestly. "You need not see him, you need not go near the room. But as for this poor fellow's being here, and dying here, if he is to die, I don't see how it can possibly be avoided. To send him away would be inhuman, if it were not impossible. It will be a sad ending to the story of our home," he continued, regretfully, "but there's no doubt about the right thing to do."

"There is no doubt."

She turned her head aside, wearily, and she—ordinarily a woman of transparent sincerity of word and action—feigned that which was farthest from the possibilities of the hour—an inclination to sleep.

"If I could sleep awhile," she said, "I should wake rested, and with my head quite clear. Then we could settle what it would be best to do. Would you mind letting me be quite alone—I am perfectly well, as you see, and shall not want anything—and saying in the house that I am not to be disturbed. An hour will be enough for me, but I must have that."

"I should think it would be the very best thing you could do," said John Pemberton, thinking that if she fell asleep now, she would probably sleep until the morning. "Had you not better let Stepney come and undress you?"

"No," she said, still more wearily; "that would rouse me. I shall sleep soundly as I am."

It was almost dark now, and John Pemberton left the room, quietly, and at once. In the corridor he met Dr. Gray, returning to Mrs. Pemberton's room; but on receiving his report of Mary's desire to sleep, the doctor said:

"Nothing better. She's all right."

"And Mr. Randall?"

"A bad case, Pemberton. A bad case. The sooner I'm off now, the better."

The moment her husband left her, Mrs. Pemberton sat up, and as soon as his footstep ceased to be audible, she rose from her bed, locked the door of her room, and began to pace up and down with unsteady steps. A deep flush replaced the previous marble paleness of her cheeks, and her limbs trembled with weakness. Her thoughts came hurrying into her mind in chaotic incoherent words. How had all things changed since the morning, since she had been sitting in the verandah with her husband, and they had talked of the new home that was to be, in the distant country which bore so different an aspect to him and to her!

The ghost had walked, indeed, the

ghost which the mere idea of their return to England had raised. She had believed it to be so distant all this time; to be awaiting her on the far-off English shore; and it had been near her, in her very vicinity, for a whole year, unsuspected. Awful irony of our blind, bounded lives, which bids us suffer from the dread of that which is not, and be unconscious of that which is; this ghost of her dead first love! She could not disentangle her thoughts for a long time; she hardly knew which fact was the more terrible, that Edward Randall was hurt, or that Edward Randall was here! "That which I feared has come upon me," was the cry of her heart. Mrs. Pemberton's untroubled life since her marriage had been free from emotions and emergencies; she had not the habit of facing difficulties, and here she was met by a grave one indeed, to be considered and encountered, when the physical effects of the shock she had received should have passed away.

For a whole hour she was undisturbed; no one came to her room. At the end of that hour, she had regained her self-control, and resolved upon her plan of action.

In the dimly-lighted room in which the sick man lay, the appliances and aspects of illness had accumulated with great celerity. John Pemberton's study, like all the sitting-rooms in the house, opened out of the square central hall, and gave on the verandah by a glass door. Its walls were lined with shelves filled with books, and its furniture was of the ordinary "gentleman's library" description, but made of the light and ornamental woods produced in the colony. Its usual orderly appearance was already metamorphosed. The writing-table and book-stands had been rolled back against the book-shelves on the hall side, and the upper end of the room was occupied by a large light iron bedstead, which had been put up by Dr. Gray's directions, and to which he and John Pemberton, assisted by Mr. Dale, had transferred the patient. Two or three hours must elapse before the nurse could arrive to take charge of the sick man; and, meanwhile, there was nothing to be done beyond watching him, and giving him from time to time some cooling drink. In an arm-chair by the bedside sat John Pemberton. He had taken Mr. Dale to the room prepared for him. It had been arranged that the gentleman who had so kindly interested himself in the stranger should remain at Mount Kiera Lodge, for a day or two. Mr. Dale was not pressed for time: he had no very special business at Sydney—none that could not be deferred for a couple of days;—and in the position in which John Pemberton was placed, he caught at the relief of this stranger's presence, as a kind of link between himself and that other still more unknown stranger who lay there in the awful separateness of illness, now muttering inarticulately in semi-consciousness, again lost in the heavy stupor of the fever.

The room into which his host ushered Mr. Dale was spacious and cheerful, and it commanded a view of the large flower-garden, and a fine plantation beyond. "Pleasant quarters these, to fall upon accidentally," was the visitor's comment, when John Pemberton left him to himself. "This worthy Britisher has evidently made a pile here."

The two portmanteaus—one very large, the other small—and the two travelling-bags, which formed the combined luggage of the chance companions whom fate had brought into Mount Kiera Lodge, had been conveyed into Mr. Dale's room, on the suggestion of John Pemberton.

"Mr. Randall," he said, "can be supplied with everything he requires from my wardrobe, until he shall be able to unlock his own valise and bag. They had better not be touched."

The clothes which, with great difficulty, they had taken off the patient, were folded, and also laid in Mr. Dale's room. John Pemberton asked Mr. Dale to turn out the contents of Mr. Randall's pockets, and they were found to consist of a purse, a cigar-case, a few letters, and a small bunch of keys on a chain. John Pemberton opened the purse, took a note of its contents—twenty pounds in gold, and a few loose shillings—and was about to lock it up in a despatch-box with the other things, when Dale, in handing them to him, let the keys fall. He picked them up, after a minute's search upon the white matting which covered the floor; and then it was, as he added the keys to the other articles in the box, that John Pemberton made the observation about the valise and the travelling-bag recorded above.

"You must want your supper," said John Pemberton, as, despatch-box in hand, he left Mr. Dale to return to the patient in the study. "I suppose the noise of the gong had better be avoided, so that you will be called when it is ready. This confusion has made them rather late, I daresay; but I should think you have not more than half an hour."

When Mr. Dale was left alone, he stepped up to the windows of his room and looked out.

"Nothing to overlook one there," he said to himself. "Except the birds, there are neither spies nor eaves-droppers in that direction."

He closed the windows, lowered the blinds, lighted the candles on the dressing-table and the mantelpiece, and then paused, thinking:

"It is safest to dress first. The other matter will wait, and be all the better and the safer for waiting."

The portmanteaus were ranged beside the wall. The larger had the appropriate-sized bag laid on its lid; the smaller had its own satellite. On the two former were the initials "E. R."; the latter had no marks of any kind. Mr. Dale unlocked the smaller portmanteau, and dressed himself in fresh attire. He had completed his toilet, and was waiting for the expected summons for some time before it came. The larger portmanteau seemed to attract his curiosity singularly for so commonplace an article. He went up to it two or three times, pushed it with his foot, rested one foot upon it, and rocked it about. Then he put his thumb and forefinger to his waistcoat pocket and felt for something, but withdrew them, repeating his former words to himself:

"Better and safer for waiting."

Mr. Dale indulged, while he was dressing, in sundry speculations concerning the people in whose house he found himself under such unusual circumstances. He was inclined to set them down on the whole for simple, kindly people. He wondered whether there were many of them: he rather thought not. The orderly quiet of the house, which even under the extraordinary aspect of the present emergency he had been struck by, did not indicate the existence, even in distant and well-regulated nurseries, of a lot of young children. The girl—he had merely caught a passing glimpse of her as they carried Mr. Randall into the house—who was giving directions to the servants in the hall, was, no doubt, Mr. Pemberton's daughter. His wife, Mr. Dale had not seen at all. He had had his back towards her, and was intently watching the patient when she had come quite unheard to the open doorway, and fainted at the sight of the helpless figure on the couch. John Pemberton carried her away so quickly that Mr. Dale did not see what had occurred. "A silly, useless sort of woman, no doubt," was his speculation concerning Mrs. Pemberton; "or, perhaps, an affected one. There was nothing to faint at: merely did it to make herself interesting, I daresay, and had her little game spoilt by my not looking round. He's a good sort of fellow, though. Nice place, good house, plenty of money I daresay. Some people have the Devil's own luck."

Mr. Dale made the above grudging remarks as he surveyed himself in the toilet-glass with a complacent expression of countenance, which, it must be admitted, was not altogether without justification. He was a good-looking, well-set-up man, about eight-and-twenty years old, with a pale complexion, dark eyes, very black hair and moustaches, and what would have been recognised twenty years ago as a "romantic" aspect.

When Mr. Dale found himself on his way to the dining-room, his cursory observation of the house was confirmed. Everything was very nice indeed—handsome, comfortable, and in perfect order. Only two persons awaited him in the dining-room. They were his host and a handsome girl, whom John Pemberton introduced as his daughter. Mrs. Pemberton, he added, was not well enough to join them. When they had taken their seats the conversation turned, as was natural, on the event of the day, and Mr. Dale found that he was to be questioned by Miss Pemberton, concerning his knowledge of the other stranger, with all a girl's innocent and persistent frankness. "Whence was he coming, whither was he going, and how came Mr. Randall to be travelling when he was so ill; or Mr. Dale, seeing that he knew him, and might have prevented it, to permit him to do so?" These and many other questions Ida put to Mr. Dale, and he found them not very easy to answer. The upshot of what he did say was, that he did not know, until they had accomplished a good deal of their journey, that Mr. Randall was so ill, and that Mr. Randall had set out under such unpromising conditions because he wanted to sail for England by a certain ship which was to leave Port Jackson in less than a week. John Pemberton was silent and preoccupied, and grateful to Ida for saving him from the necessity of talking. It was not, indeed, the terrible trouble of dangerous illness to a beloved member of his own household that had come upon him, it was only the stranger within his gates who was likely to have to pass through those of the Valley of Death; but a great gloom had fallen upon the spirit of the prosperous and kindly man. He would have repudiated with disdain the accusation of being superstitious, of believing in omens of any kind, and yet his mind was troubled. How fair that morning had dawned upon them, in its glorious midsummer beauty; how full they had been of hopes and projects! Nothing had really occurred to dim the one or to change the other, but a change had come. His Mary could not be very strong, John Pemberton thought, if her nerves gave way as they had done to-day, on an occasion which had no intimate relation with her feelings. Could it be that she was not well, and was concealing the fact from him, and that in that fact there was the explanation of her little zeal, her almost languid acquiescence in their projected return to England? Her looks, however, were so far from justifying such a supposition, that he tried to relieve his depression by rejecting it.

"I decidedly object to being sent away, papa," said Ida, à propos of the general topic. "Stepney tells me you and Mary talk of packing me off under her charge; but I don't mean to go. Why on earth should there be more risk for me, than for Mary or yourself?"

"Who is Mary, I wonder?" Mr. Dale said to himself.

"I don't know that there is more risk for you than for Mary or for me, if it should turn out that there really is risk for any one," answered John Pemberton gravely; "but you have not got a duty to fulfil in this matter, and we have. I don't think I should have thought it right to take this gentleman into the house, if I had known that he was in fever of any kind, though I hardly see how it could have been avoided. But it is done now; it cannot be undone; and Mary and I must stick to our posts. I am referring to my wife," added John Pemberton, addressing Mr. Dale.

"Case of young stepmother, no doubt," thought Mr. Dale, receiving the intimation with a bow.

"At all events, you will not send me away until Dr. Gray says it must be done," pleaded Ida. "If it did not add to your worry, papa, and make Mary fidgety, I should like to feel that I could be of some use to somebody."

She looked very pretty as she said these earnest words, with her large, dark eyes lifted lovingly to her father's face; and an observer, who cared to trace the soul in the features, would have seen that the trying position of an only child had not spoiled Ida Pemberton. That she was an only child had been speedily discerned by Mr. Dale, though nothing was said on the point. She had the indescribable, but instantly perceptible air and manner of one who is the central object in a happy home—one who is without an equal or a competitor, quite assured, perfectly happy, the all in all to those whose delight it is to surround the young bright life with all that love and care can give of charm and security.

A girl so young as Ida, if she had been brought up in England, would have had less ease of manner, but probably much more knowledge of the world, or, at least, of varieties of character. Ida had lived with her father always; she had gone through no school-room experiences; and she combined familiarity with the characters, the lives, the ideas, and the associates of Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton with unsuspecting unconsciousness of any kind of life, other than or outside theirs and her own. The unknown England, whither they were going, presented no pictures at all to her imagination. She naturally liked the novelty, alike new and indefinite. She was at the age of faith and hope in the future—the age at which they are instinctive: they lose their plenitude of peace when we know how to define them. There was nothing to fear from a future which was to include her father, and Mary, and Dick. Yes, Dick was going "home" also; and if ever a shadow of anxiety crossed Ida's mind, it was as to whether the arrangements which her father proposed to make for Dick's voyage, regardless of expense, would be found satisfactory by that unparalleled quadruped. The very farthest point to which Ida's mind had yet travelled on the road which so soon becomes a beaten track to most of us—the apprehension of evil—was the asking herself, "What should I do if anything were to happen to Dick?"

She was sorry for the sick man under their roof, but she knew nothing practically of pain or illness. She had grown up, in the beautiful climate of New South Wales, as the trees and the flowers grew; and neither sickness nor death had ever come under her observation. She had no remembrance of her own mother's death: there were no terrible images or painful recollections in the field of her memory. The foreground and the background of the picture of her young life were alike sunny and shadowless.

So Ida talked gaily to the stranger, and made him a gracious promise that, if Dr. Gray did not pronounce that she was to be sent away, she would introduce him to Dick on the following morning.

At the conclusion of the meal, Ida bade her father "Good night," and took leave of Mr. Dale, saying she was going to Mary, and, as she left the dining-room, she was met by a servant, who came to announce the arrival of the nurse. John Pemberton went at once to the study to see to the installation of that functionary, leaving Dale to the companionship of wine, fruit, and cigars.

"This isn't bad," thought that gentleman as he helped himself to wine and lighted a cigar, "but it would have been better if she had stayed. She's pretty in her style. Only child, eh? and will have a pot of money, no doubt. Very accommodating of the young step-mother not to provide her with competitors. I wonder what she is like?"

If he had taken the trouble of accompanying his host to the sick man's room, his curiosity would have been satisfied. When John Pemberton entered the study he found the maid, who had been left in temporary charge of Mr. Randall, replaced by Mary, who was seated in the armchair by the bedside. She had changed her evening dress for a soft robe of white cashmere, of the noiseless quality which befits a sick room. All traces of disturbance had passed away from her face, and the serene composure which her husband was accustomed to see in it reigned there instead, tempered only by the compassion and anxiety which must necessarily accompany the responsibility of serious illness in her house.

"You here, Mary!" John Pemberton whispered to her. "Is this wise? I hoped you were asleep, and did not go to look after you, lest I should disturb you."

"I am quite well," she answered, "and I thought I ought to see for myself how Mr. Randall was doing. He is very restless. I hope the nurse is a competent person."

"Gray speaks confidently of her. The sooner she is installed the better. No material change is to be looked for until morning. Has he spoken coherently at all?"

"Not at all. I don't think there is ever more than semi-consciousness."

John Pemberton left the room to summon the nurse, and his wife knelt for a moment by the side of the suffering man, gazing intently into his drawn, wasted, fever-stricken face.

"This may be my last, last look," she murmured, but without any external agitation. "This morning my greatest dread was that I might see him somewhere; to-night I can thank God that if the end has to come, it will come thus and here."

She rose, and laid her soft white hand for a moment upon the burning forehead of the sick man, who moved uneasily, and moaned, under the light touch.

The nurse came in. She was a strong, capable-looking woman, and she took possession of the patient on the spot.

"You have Dr. Gray's instructions?" said Mrs. Pemberton.

"Yes," was the brief reply. The nurse was surveying the sick man with a cool appraising kind of look, and presently she added:

"There's not much to be done, at present, at all events. If you'll excuse me, ma'am, you had better not tire yourself."

"No, no; I am going at once," said Mrs. Pemberton.

She left the room. The nurse moved gently about, rearranging everything according to her own notion. This task completed, she carefully inspected her patient, and commenced her night watch. But she muttered his name, and that of the other stranger under the roof of Mount Kiera Lodge, more than once.

"Randall!" she said; "Randall. Well, I may have heard it before; it isn't such an uncommon name but what I may. But Dale—what is it I have in my head about Dale? It's something, if I could only get at it, and something that's not to anybody's credit neither. Never mind, I shall remember it when I'm not thinking about it."

Thus the brief night of the beautiful antipodean summer came down over the household, upon which the morning had dawned in such peace and serenity.

MAKING MONEY.

Most of us have been called upon, at some time in our lives, to inspect and admire a model farm; its prize-pigs; its stall-fed shorthorns, better lodged and infinitely better cared for than the labourers on the estate; its miles of gutta-percha hose; the whirring machinery; the tanks;

the steam-ploughs; the expensive plant; the ostentatious cleanliness. And as we are bidden to wonder at each fresh marvel—the Dutch dairy, with its cans and pans burnished to the brilliancy of Mambrino's helmet; the stacks of draining tiles; the huge root-house; the tall Italian rye-grass in which the sleek kine stand knee deep—the cynical question (which it would be treason to put), "Does all this pay?" is apt silently to suggest itself to the bewildered visitor. Nor is it impossible that we may be half-convinced that the slovenly methods of old Farmer Pottles, whose yard is a Slough of Despond, and whose sheep's fleeces are as ragged as the thatch of his barn, may not be a surer road to wealth than the exquisite neatness and elaborate arrangements of the scientific cultivator.

Very often the blunt home question, "Does it pay?" would, after a little decorous fencing, be met by a qualified negative. It never was meant, or wished, that some show establishments of this sort should be worked at a profit. Such a model farm is not unfrequently a rich man's hobby—useful, as a place of exhibition for improved breeds of cattle and the newest agricultural implements, but the owner of which no more expects to make money by it than he does by his pines and azaleas. By lavish expenditure, the worst patch of waste land may be made to blossom like the rose, but an artificially-created Goshen does not always bring in an adequate pecuniary return for the capital sunk in it. Skilled farming, backed by a long purse, will, of course, prove a trade-success, but only on condition that it is conducted on utilitarian principles, and that no idle crotchets or pet whims are permitted to interfere with the steady management of the business.

The old-fashioned style of farming, that which exacted, and was satisfied with, the getting of the traditional three rents out of the land, becomes every year more and more difficult to adhere to. It is "horn," not "corn," that increases the snug balance at the County Bank. Now that no legal shackles prevent the use of foreign grain, home-grown wheat yields but a steady and moderate profit to the producer. But to supply the market with live beef and mutton, especially the former, is more precarious, although more gainful, than to give a preference to cereals. It is only a capitalist who can endure the ravages of rinderpest, or calmly confront the loss of a flock by foot-rot. The wages of labour, too, are rising, although slowly, and the working expenses of a farm are heavier, each few years, than have been the case a lustre or two ago. The old prejudice against flax yet survives, but other crops which require very deep and fertile soils, such as beetroot and hops, are justly in favour with those who are rich enough to wait, till one propitious season has compensated for the spare returns of two or three indifferent ones.

The truth is that in agriculture, as in many another form of business, the battle is to the strong. The picturesque old farm, with its straggling hedgerows and rush-infested meadows, has no chance of competing with a Norfolk or Lothian homestead, where the tall brick chimney towers over parallelograms of stacks and ricks. All sorts of crops must be grown, a large head of stock maintained, the untiring strength of steam employed wherever it is economically expedient, to wring the uttermost farthing of profit out of the soil. By spade husbandry, and ceaseless thrift, more mouths, as the experience of France, and Belgium, and Switzerland, fully proves, may be fed than here at home. The peasant proprietor who gives up his time and his thoughts, no less than the perpetual labour of wife, and son, and daughter, to the tilling of a few beloved fields, does get a heavier yield of potatoes, a more manifold return of wheat, than ever reward the British autocrat of the farm, but only by putting in motion more pairs of horny hands, the owners of which must be fed, be it only with lard and cabbage, rye and buckwheat. It needs the passionate love for his bit of land which honest Jacques cherishes so strongly, to make life under such conditions even tolerable.

Perhaps the most melancholy form which active speculation within the four seas ever takes, is when some educated man, with two, three, or four thousand pounds, inherited or saved, begins the world afresh by renting a farm. As often as not, the neophyte is a retired officer, sometimes a barrister, weary of the solemn sham of a wig and gown, without briefs to justify them, or a young City man, who has outgrown the dream of Lombard-street opulence. For each and all, the farm, in nineteen cases out of twenty, proves a trap. Even health is not sure, in the lack of profit, to be derived from it. There is fresh air, but ague as well. Exercise is to be had, but the facilities for contracting rheumatism in an aggravated form are seldom absent. There is no particular drainage, and no permanent supply of wholesome water, so that every wet or dry season evokes the fiend of typhus, beneath the rotten thatch of the tumbledown cottages adjacent. Good diet, quinine, and prudence may keep off the baneful influences of the place, but to retain health was not the primary object of the chief of the little colony. The children may look forward to romping amid new-mown hay and newly-plucked hazel-nuts, and to unlimited ponies and cricket; the wife may have visions of such cream and butter, such eggs and strawberries, as never gladden the eyes of Londoners; but the head of the household was tempted by hopes of a comfortable ten per cent. or so, with an occasional windfall or bonus, on his capital.

Unfortunately, seamanship excepted, there is no craft harder to acquire than that which seems so easy to those unversed in farm lore, and which is certainly practised by persons of very limited brain-power. But then, the farmer, to the matter born, has, at any rate, from infancy been familiar with a great many petty truths which the amateur can only learn from the costly smart of repeated failures. He is in no danger of wasting his substance on plausible patent commodities, that the sanguine essay as a warning to the prudent. The routine of quiet, humdrum agriculture is well known to him by sheer force of habit. He is better served than a more deserving master might be, simply because he knows from his boyhood up what a day's work ought to be. And this is precisely the last lesson that the ex-barrister, the former captain, the retired stockbroker, contrives to learn. He may be liberal, and genial, and frank-spoken, prone to give treats to those in his employment, and open-handed in the season of distress. He may even be popular, and meet smiling faces, and see hats that fly off willingly to do him honour, when he walks abroad. But he cannot help feeling that the very hinds who like him, still presume upon his ignorance; that work is slack, and perquisites increasing; that sloth and carelessness elude his vigilance; and that his bucolic blunders are the subject of village ridicule. At last he is driven to entrust the reins of government to some bailiff or foreman, more long-headed and glib of speech than the rest, and after a year or two of this vicarious management, is thankful to withdraw with the loss of half his substance.

There are forms of business, to the profane vulgar more seemingly complex than that of farming, which daring adventurers have entered upon and thriven by, without any apprenticeship or previous experience. In the palmy days of Manchester, and when they of Staleybridge could sleep untroubled by the dread that internecine war would cut off the cheap supply of long-stapled American cotton, all sorts of persons abruptly blossomed into millowners, guided the new concern, apparently by the light of nature, and steered the galleon of their own fortunes safely into port, realising in ten years the means of a comfortable retirement. Perhaps the truth is, that the superintending of smooth-working machinery, and of the trained specialists that wait on loom, and bobbin, and jenny, and all the other quaintly-named contrivances in steel, and brass, and iron, is more easy than the supervision of some scores of labourers, and the horses and oxen they tend. Weather does not affect the production of yarn and shirtings, as it does that of meat and grain, and there is less opportunity for the unjust steward to practise his immemorial arts to his master's detriment, in a mill, than on a farm.

There are establishments of all sorts, both wholesale and retail, in which a spectator feels that he breathes, as it were, an atmosphere of profit, and where on every hand are apparent the evidences of a solid prosperity. To find these thriving concerns no certain rule is required, and none can be laid down. Certainly, large shops, like large ships and large factories, answer better than small ones, and each new Leviathan that unshutters its imposing front, and brings its battery of plate-glass windows to bear upon some leading thoroughfare, swallows up the humbler ventures in the adjacent by-streets, as a big spider eats up little spiders. Yet we may see a palatial emporium with every possible requisite save buyers, while there is a ceaseless elbowing and jostling of competitive customers in the narrow entrance to some low-browed, dingy den of the long-established variety. Very many well-to-do people prefer to deal where their fathers and mothers, particularly their mothers, were wont to deal, even though nothing of the traditional excellence remains, save the name of the old firm, dimly visible through the grime of years, that looms above the well-known doorway. There are shops, and warehouses, in London, which are almost anonymous, so faint and attenuated are the letters that indicate the names of the proprietors, and where a proposal to increase the accommodation, or cleanse the frontage, would be scouted as sacrilegious.

The world had accomplished several stages on the road of material progress, before some busy brain gave birth to the idea that it was possible to make money by lending it. The earliest loans all partook of the character of pawnbroking. The pawn might be a slave, a vineyard, a child, a camel, possibly the canoe, without which the fisher was helpless, or the mare that helped the Bedouin to rob with impunity. Then the grip of the law—laws being made by the classes that played the part of creditor, rather than that of debtor—tightened, and liberty, life itself, personal honour and family affections, were held to be mortgaged by the unlucky borrower. It is only among the Malays that the debtor is, as among the patrician usurers of ancient Rome, wholly the chattel of the lender. But lending money is largely profitable only when the scale of the operations is very wide or very narrow. The conventional money-lender, he of the post-obits and ever-so-much per cent.—the vampire who is presumed to suck the blood of young heirs—seldom dies rich. There are many blanks in his lottery. Far better off than he is, not only Baron Grossmann, the millionaire, whose advances are the sinews of war to a dozen states, and on whom grateful monarchs press their portraits, set in diamonds, but crafty old M. Grippesou, the Shylock of the Halles Centrales of Paris.

Lending, "à la petite semaine," is not an agreeable occupation per se, nor is it one of which the philanthropist might approve, although prudent Anatole Grippesou finds it profitable. He lends on Monday, to be repaid on Saturday, petty sums, ranging from forty sous to forty francs, and on Saturday receives for the accommodation from ten sous to ten francs. Twenty-five per cent. for the five days' use of borrowed money would at the end of the year amount to something very stupendous; nor are there many bad debts to be written down on the wrong side of the tattered and dog's-eared ledger, in which this benefactor of his species keeps a record of his transactions. Oddly enough, Grippesou and his like are only half unpopular with the hawkers, and porters, and the minor stall-keepers, of the market, on whose weaknesses they fatten, and whose hazy notion it is that everything must be paid for, and that a little more or less makes no great difference in the long run.

There is a great deal of legitimate profit to be made, in countries where the normal rate of interest on mortgage is high, by lending on the security of land or other tangible property. This is true of Germany and Russia, truer still of Hungary, Roumania, India, and Egypt. The ten per cent. of a German mortgage rises to fifteen in Poland or the Bukowina, and in oriental countries often soars as high as twenty per cent. England, on account of the superabundance of small speculative capitalists, and France, because of the sensible law which enforces the registration of all charges on land, are the two countries in which a loan can be obtained on the easiest terms. It is where misgovernment, civil commotion, or ignorance, or more probably the three combined, have scared away the shy nymph Capital, that the heaviest returns for cash invested may be looked for by those who can afford to give their time and their pains, as well as their money, to the task in hand.

Competent authorities declare that, of paying speculations, those which answer the best are a school and a public-house, and, but for the pressure of competition, this might be positively instead of approximatively true. An Eton master, for instance, or an Eton dame, may be congratulated on the possession of a nest as comfortably feathered as any that survive since the rooting out of the old state sinecures. A chemist, who is the lucky proprietor of a large corner shop, would grow rapidly rich, were it not for the frequency with which particoloured lamps, and huge bottles of brilliant green, red, and azure, dot the lighted streets; while, on the other hand, it is rare to hear of a baker who has reared the foundations of a fortune on hot rolls and kissing-crust. It is a good thing to be a banker, better still to be a maltster, best of all to be a brewer or a distiller. Of these last there are very few, and they, in common with most of the capitalists concerned in the production of strong drink, drive a safe and gainful trade. A practical monopoly is by far less invidious than that legal one, which causes many an evil eye to be cast at the high dividends of a gas company.

There is a marked divergence of opinion as to the surroundings which a man who makes money should affect. Thus the aspiring young doctor knows that a large house, a well-furnished consulting-room, and a neat brougham, will testify better to his powers of healing than any number of certificates could do. The lawyer, again, does his work most reputably in shabby and comfortless chambers, or in an office mildewed, as it were, with ink, and to the bookshelves and dingy walls of which the dust clings lovingly. A new company seeks to dazzle by the splendour of its corporate abode, while there are some old banks which are apparently vain of the sordid gloom of a locality known these hundred years, and more, as a Tom Tiddler's Ground, for the safe picking up of gold and silver. Mercantile firms of European repute have sometimes to be hunted for in darkling courts and mean alleys, while more ephemeral establishments flaunt their flashing brass-plates in the chief thoroughfares of the City.

In spite of the patent advantages of education, there are few of us who have not, in all countries, met with men ignorant of the familiar accomplishments of reading and writing, and perhaps perversely proud of their ignorance, yet who made money fast, and were in some degree objects of admiration to better taught but less successful competitors. It will always be found that such persons are gifted with robust health, shrewd mother-wit, and a superabundance of energy, which spends itself in keen bargaining. After all, a river runs the swifter for the narrowness of its channel, and a clever, vigorous mind, cut off from all the sources of interest to which reading is the key, is not unlikely to concentrate itself on the pursuit of gain, and to attain the goal. Fortunately for the world at large, there are other occupations more engrossing, and of more general benefit, than even that of making money.

THE MUSIC OF STREET CRIES.

A SOMEWHAT curious inquiry is suggested by the title given to this paper; an inquiry whether two anomalous kinds of sound—musical tones and street noises—are so very anomalous after all? There is reason to believe that the voice finds it easier to talk in musical rhythm, than in tones which have no harmonious relation one to another; music of a rude kind, perhaps, but still music. Any one of us can ascertain, by experience, that it is really difficult to keep on for any great length of time uttering vocal sounds which have no diatonic or regular intervals in the upward and downward variations of pitch; the voice gets into a kind of sing-song, whether we intend it or not.

The late Mr. Charles Knight, in one of the many pleasant papers comprising his London, treated the subject of street noises or sounds, in connection with our ever-active and never-asleep Metropolis. The purpose in view was, taking different periods in the history of London, and different employments and amusements, to notice the almost infinite variety of sounds that may be heard in our streets. The article in question is illustrated by a woodcut, engraved from Hogarth's Enraged Musician, in which the effects of a superabundance of street cries and noises are typified with much sagacity and humour. A knife-grinder is sharpening a butcher's cleaver on a grindstone; a dog is barking at him, evidently troubled by the grating disturbance; a hawker is bawling out the names and merits of the wares he has to sell; a man is blowing a horn; a dustman rings a bell; a boy is beating a toy drum just bought at a fair; a little girl is springing a rattle; a paviour is ramming down stones; a milkmaid is announcing her "Milk, pretty maids;" a blind clarionet-player is sending forth his dismal discords; a coarse-voiced ballad singer is singing, while a brat is squalling in her arms; a parrot is screaming at a window; a chimney-sweeper is bawling out and rattling at the top of a chimney-pot; two cats maintain a belligerent concert on the tiles; while a flag hoisted on a steeple tells us pretty plainly that the church-bells are ringing, in celebration of some holiday or public event.

The work just noticed traces the course of London cries through four centuries. Lydgate, in his London Lackpenny, speaks of the sellers of spectacles and of old hats at the doors of Westminster Hall, in the time of Henry the Fifth; and of eating-house keepers at the river side, who shouted their invitation to him to come in and take

> Bread with ale and wine,
> Ribs of beef both fat and full fine!

In Eastcheap he heard cries of "Roast

beef!" and "Hot pies!" In Cannon-street, "Hot sheep's feet!" In other places, "Hot peascods!" "Ripe strawberries and cherries!" "Pepper!" "Saffron!" "Mackerel!" "Rushes for the floor!" (before the days of carpets and floorcloth.) For some centuries, even in such leading thoroughfares as Cheapside, mercers and drapers, milliners and haberdashers, were wont to shout out their wares at shop doors. Stall-keepers and itinerant dealers were relatively more numerous than they are now. In the times of the Stuarts, the official bellman kept up his tintinnabulum; the night watchman shouted, "Hang out your lights!" the orange-girls announced their golden fruit; the fish-wives were voluble concerning the freshness and other merits of their mackerel, plaice, oysters, flounders, smelts, mussels, eels, and crabs; the herb-wives and tripe-women were quite obstreperous in their bawling. Not only did men shout out their readiness to buy old suits, coats, and cloaks, but women did the like in regard to articles of female attire, and to pieces of old satin, taffety, and velvet. Some of the street dealers announced themselves as buyers of old iron, others of kitchen stuff. The criers of New River water were not till a somewhat later period superseded by the house-to-house supply system. The milkmaid announced her milk, shortened to "mio" (which some wag has transformed into "mi-eau," half water). And so, in later times, we come to the herb-sellers of Bucklersbury; the small-coal man; the firewood dealer; the itinerant cooper and tinker; the corn-cutter (standing with knife and scissors at street corners); the mutton pieman; the fried sausage vendor; the sellers of hot fermity and saloop—each with his appropriate cry. The horn of the newsman was of later introduction. As to street musicians, there has been no lack of them for ages past.

The reader will find other illustrations of the street cries of London in one of our past volumes,* and therefore we pass them by here without further comment, in order to proceed to the object more immediately in view—the estimation of street cries in relation to their musical effects.

It is clearly traceable that not only the cries of street dealers, but military, seafaring, watchmen's, and religious cries and sounds, have had peculiar musical characteristics in different countries and at different times—characteristics which became so well known to the people as to acquire all the force of habit and prescriptive custom. Sometimes feelings and passions were aroused to a high pitch of enthusiasm by such cries or watchwords. The chief cities of the world have each a kind of language belonging to itself, expressing hour by hour the almost infinitely-varied sounds of social and commercial life. Speaking literally, the totality of these sounds constitutes the veritable Voice of the People, and becomes, in some phases of civilisation, the traditional formula of varied groups of the population.

The street cry, as well as the recitative of an opera, is intermediate between speaking and singing. Among exceptional vocal utterances the mournful cries of the sick and wounded on a field of battle are pretty much the same in all nations, so far as sounds are concerned, and irrespective of articulated words; but numerous other cries and sounds differ much in different countries. Sailors utter a kind of sing-song when weighing anchor; the Nile boatmen have a sing-song of their own. In the old days, special cries took place in the worship of Bacchus and Cybele; the funereal rites of the Greeks and Romans had each its own peculiar vocal character; as has, at the present day, the shouting announcement of the Muezzim in Mohammedan countries. The ancients generally had special war-cries, and so have semi-civilised nations had in all times. The cry of the Crusaders helped to work them up to enthusiasm. The French soldiers have (or had) a cry of "Cuirassiers!" which was augmented to a peculiar rattle by duplicating and reduplicating the letter "r"—"Cuirassiers!" "Cuirrassiers!" "Cuirrrassiers," "Cuirrrrassiers!" The "Hurrah" of the British troops in the Crimea attracted the attention alike of the French and the Russians. Street watchmen, in the old German towns, had each a peculiar intonation of voice, almost a tune, when announcing the hour. The proclamations of heralds, in the days of tournaments and feudal warfare, were characteristic in their tones; and so are the passwords of sentinels in all the European armies.

The street sounds of Paris have attracted more attention from musical men than those of any other city. Nearly three centuries ago, Guillaume de la Villeneuve collected all the street cries he could meet with; those, at any rate, in which men of similar trades used similar sing-songs. The lantern seller; milk seller; firewood dealer; charcoal dealer; hot-pie man; butter dealer; sellers of wine, vinegar, gingerbread, fruit, pins, needles, and tapes; chimney-sweepers; buyers of old clothes and old iron; the cries of all these itinerants were worked up by him into a curious series of quatrains. Many additions were made to the list by later collectors, and much satirical use was made of these cries by Rabelais and other writers. Composers listened to the sounds, or inflexions of voice, with which the words were usually uttered, and found that they (the sounds) could be set down on paper in musical notation. Clément Jannequin composed a vocal piece in four-part harmony, bringing in a number of these cries. During the last century it was a favourite custom with French writers of vaudevilles to introduce some of the cries of Paris, such as in Panard's "Description de Paris," and Favart's "Soirée des Boulevards." During the Revolutionary period, street shouts, songs, and cries had a strong political effect, and the cries of the colporteurs (sellers of political pamphlets and journals) had not a little to do with the growth of the excitement which drove Louis Philippe from the throne.

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* All the Year Round, New Series, Vol. 11, p. 372, "London Street Cries."

M. Kastner has gone into this subject more fully than any other writer; indeed, he has devoted to it a volume of no inconsiderable size, bringing his own musical ability to work in conjunction with the literary researches of M. Edouard Thierry. Listening to the varied cries of Paris, he has jotted down the sounds in musical notation, and traced the details of what composers call staccato, legato, crescendo, diminuendo, appogiatura, da capo, modulation, &c. He makes up four groups. The first comprises the cries of itinerant dealers in articles of food, sweets, and beverages—such as piemen, gingerbread sellers, hot baked provision sellers, vendors of sausages, cured meats of sundry kinds, milk, eggs, cheese, butter, poultry, game, fruit, vegetables, mackerel, sardines, herrings, barley-sugar, fresh water, lemonade, &c. He tells a capital story of a vendor who, close to the gate of the Tuileries, shouted out for sale, "Trois Anglais pour un liard! À un liard trois Anglais!" An English tourist, coming out of the Palace-gardens, misinterpreted the cry for a meditated insult on himself and his countrymen; a turmoil and scuffle ensued, not allayed until the police had explained that a particular kind of pear is called Anglais, or English, and that the dealer was selling them at three for a farthing. Kastner's second class of cries comprises those relating to various kinds of household requisites, such as baskets, mats, wooden-bowls, shovels, mallets, pails, buckets, tubs, and sponges. He notices the nasal character of the cries of those who buy old rags and "old clo';" and gives the notes of one itinerant, who throws much variety into his music by varying the form of his interrogatory, which may be Anglicised into, "Will you buy? Won't you buy at all?—won't you buy at all? Will you buy?" A third class is made up of the cries of articles for personal use—women's and children's boots and shoes, pins and needles, cheap telescopes and opera-glasses, &c. Lastly, he adverts to itinerant workmen—persons whose cries announce, not something to sell or to buy, but something to do or to repair—chimney-sweepers, glaziers, tinkers, turncocks, knife and scissor grinders, chair menders, cobblers, bellows menders; together with the heterogeneous assemblage of musicians, ballad singers, conjurers, and mountebanks.

The attention bestowed by musical composers on the street cries of the French capital has already been adverted to. Grétry was a firm believer in the musical character of such cries, and of the sounds given to words in ordinary conversation. He asserted that every articulated sound can be set down on paper in musical notation. A friend disputed the correctness of this assertion, and proposed to visit him as a means of testing it. On entering the room he gave the salutation, "Bon jour, monsieur!" whereupon Grétry at once noted down the inflexions of voice, located them according to the French gamut syllables—ut, sol, sol, ut—and sang or repeated them: thus bringing conviction to the doubter. Grétry fully believed that the varied modes of uttering these three words, so as to express respect, friendliness, servility, superciliousness, satire, irony, and other states of feeling, can be very well conveyed by musical notation; and that, to some extent, a man's character may be divined by his manner of saying, "Bon jour, monsieur!" or "Bon jour, mon cher!" Berlioz noticed something to the same effect in the Italian salutation, "Buon giorno, signore!" Grétry made the bassoon imitate the yawn or gape with which Ali expresses his ennui in "Zémire et Azor;" and also conveyed the effect of ridicule in one passage of his "Isabelle et

Gertrude." Kohler insists that song springs from speech as surely as the butterfly from the chrysalis; that the song of Mignon, "Kenst du das Land wo die citronen blühen?" when spoken, almost creates its own music. Gaubert has composed a "potpourri" burlesque; Parisot, a "grande valse imitatif;" Felicien David, a "quartette;" Eloart, a symphony; Clapisson, an operatic scenic chorus; and other composers, songs and duets—either based almost wholly on the cries of Paris, or introducing several of them.

But the most remarkable musical development of these cries remains to be noticed—the work of a composer we have already mentioned, Kastner. It bears the imposing title, "Grande Symphonie Humouristique—Les Cries de Paris." That this is no trifle, may be judged from the fact that it fills one hundred and seventy closely-engraved pages of full-sized music. It is, in true symphonic form, divided into three parts or movements: one devoted to the cries and sounds of Paris in early morn; another to those in busy mid-day; and the third, to those in the evening. Like Beethoven's Choral Symphony, it comprises vocal as well as instrumental music—the latter greatly predominating in quantity. The instrumental music is, in fact, arranged in full score for a complete orchestra, with due attention to the fitness of some instruments rather than others to imitate certain sounds. The vocalists are supposed to be Titania, as a kind of fairy awakener of the dawn; an aroused sleeper, annoyed at the sounds disturbing him; a dreamer, similarly disturbed in his love reveries; and a miscellaneous chorus of dealers, costermongers, hawkers, pedlars, and newsboys. The imitations of military and ballroom sounds are mostly left to the musical instruments; but the street cries are vocalised, and are most ingeniously brought together in four-part harmony. Kastner went to the original source of information—the streets and market-places. Occasionally one particular itinerant would have a cry so musical as to attract his attention; in other instances he found that all the dealers in one particular commodity adopt a uniform and conventional cry; but all alike were fish that came to his net. Let the reader imagine a composition in four-part harmony, each singer giving his scraps of melody in the manner of a catch, and adapting each bit of melody to the words of a street dealer. Let him further imagine that the literary author of the symphony, Edouard Thierry, has contrived so to arrange the cries as to make them rhyme one with another. Then it will be seen how we arrive at such examples as the following, each line being, in most instances, a separate and complete cry:

"Des chouces, des poireaux, d' la carotte!"
"Mes beaux oignons, six liards la botte!"
"A trois d' six blancs,
Les rouge', les blancs!"
"V'la les pomm' de terre!"
"Les gâteaux d' Nanterre!"
"Artichauts, mes gros artichauts!"
"Mouron pour les petits oiseaux!"

Here the list of cries is interrupted by voices in conversation; but the respite is short. They recommence with

"La noix, la noix, manger la noix à nouvelle!"
"Couteaux, ciseaux, à repasser!"

The awakened sleeper anathematises the cries and the criers, but without avail:

"A deux liards les reinettes!"
"Mes trois paquets d'allumettes!"
"Chasselas de Fontainebleau!"
"V'là l' maq'reau frais: v'là l' maquereau!"
"Bon fromag' de Marolles!"
"Etamez les cass'roles!"
"Carr' leur d'soulier!"
"V'là l' vitrier!"
"Marchand de balais!"

A literal translation of these cries is well-nigh impossible. We can, it is true, find dictionary equivalents to the names of the articles sold, and to the designations of trades, but many of the words are oddly clipped, while others partake of a kind of technical slang, a patois of the market-place. Baked pears are announced quite musically:

"Poir' cuit' au four! Oh! poir' cuit'!"

while the water-carrier's lengthened cry is—

"A l'eau - - - - - - - - - - - - au!"

Of course other cities besides Paris, and other countries besides France, furnish illustrations of this curious subject, though not perhaps in so full a degree. We must not rely on the cries of the Market Chorus at Naples in Auber's Masaniello, nor on those at the Frost Fair at St. Petersburg in Meyerbeer's Étoile du Nord; for there is not sufficient proof that these really imitate musically the cries intended, however well they may sound on the opera stage. But in other quarters musical composers have not failed to find materials to work upon. Scarlatti, in one of his sonatas, introduced the cries used by Italian drivers and muleteers. Tréjer, in a humorous canon for four voices, brings in the cries of the fruit and vegetable dealers on the Ponte della

Trinità at Florence, as well as the sound of wheels rolling over the bridge, and of boatmen's oars under it. The negro porters in the sugar-plantations of Brazil join in a sing-song cry, so musical as to have tempted composers to jot it down. Mr. Lane, in his Modern Egyptians, gives many examples of this kind which he picked up among the street dealers of Cairo. M. Valldemola, director of court concerts to Queen Isabella of Spain, noted down many of the street cries of Madrid, and found them to be more sedate and grave than those of Paris. A similar characteristic has been observed at Rome, where the street cries partake somewhat of the tones of what composers call plain chant in ecclesiastical music. The sand dealers in the northern and eastern provinces of France have a cry often very musical in its inflexions.

Concerning our own country, Mr. Gardiner some years ago jotted down the music of the cries of the sellers of milk, hot rolls, muffins and crumpets, water-cresses, hot spiced gingerbread, baked 'taters, hot-cross buns, vegetables, chick-weed, groundsel, cats' and dogs' meat, dolls and dolls' bedsteads, and the specially musical refrain of "Young lambs to sell!"—which last we have heard resuscitated in the London streets in the autumn of the present year. A well-known catch, "Old Chairs to Mend," in four-part harmony, brings in a number of street cries, intermingled in a whimsical and amusing fashion. We do not know how it may be at the present time, but some years ago the itinerant and market-place fish-wives of Edinburgh and Leith cried their herrings with such a shrill and peculiar inflexion of voice, as to tempt a composer to introduce it in the well-known song of "Caller Herring."

There is, then, music in street cries. That there is also torment in street music All the Year Round has more than once declared,* echoing the moans and maledictions of the late Mr. Babbage.

AUTUMN.

The year is dying, dying,
On fell, and plain, and hill;
Rich robed in russet and gold he lies,
While his dirge swells up to the low grey skies,
In the wild wet wind that sobs and moans,
In the stream that frets o'er its troubled stones,
In the weary wail of the ceaseless rain,
On plashing wood-walk and sodden plain
Sad nature mourns her fill.

The year is dying, dying;
They are gathering round his grave
The grasses that shiver, and blanch, and die,
The leaves that float earthward silently,
The hollyhock bowing her stately head,
To the moist rich mould of the garden bed;
And bee and butterfly, folding their wings,
As they perish amid their wanderings,
Where the last rose petals wave.

The year is dying, dying;
And watching his bier, in sooth
'Tis as hard to believe in sun and flowers,
As for age to realise golden hours,
When hope, and joy, and trust arose,
As the violets waken from winter snows.
Ah! at April's call they return once more,
But never for us on the farther shore,
Dawns the morning of love and youth!

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

JOHN LAW.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II. THE MISSISSIPPI SCHEME.

At the period of Law's financial success, several French trading companies were clinging to a precarious existence. The old East India Company, reconstituted by Colbert, had not paid dividends for many years. There was a Guinea Company trading on the West Coast of Africa — in negroes of course. There was a private privilege, granted in 1713, for the China trade—yet unworked. Finally, there was the brand-new Western Company, intended to cultivate the French possessions in North America, combining Crozat's grant with the monopoly of selling beaver—a modest venture, with a capital of two millions of livres. As it is not unusual to speak of the whole of these schemes under the general title of Mississippi, it may be well to explain the share of the scheme occupied by the Father of Waters. Towards the end of the seventeenth century France became possessed of the country of Louisiana, a term not restricted to the present State of that name, but including the whole basin of the Mississippi and its tributaries. From the French settlements in Canada on the north, it extended to the Gulf of Mexico on the south; to the eastward and westward its boundaries might be said to have been, in the language of the immortal O'Mulligan, "over there." The control of this Louisiana, which might have been construed to signify the whole territory now occupied by the United States—Texas and Alaska excepted—had been granted, in 1712, by Louis the Fourteenth to one Antoine Crozat, merchant, who had been so fortunate in his maritime speculations (nature unknown) as to have gained a capital of forty millions of livres. For a certain sum of hard cash (not specified) the said Crozat obtained a grant of this eligible property, which the French funnily speak of as "these deserts," with the exclusive right of trading to it for sixteen years. After five years' struggle, Crozat thought that, as the speculation was fatally unprofitable, he had better hand it over to a company, and suggested the scheme to Law, who surprised everybody by declaring that it would be necessary to create not a "wretched little shopping affair existing on a capital of two millions, but a sovereign company, fit to rival the great companies of Holland and England, and depending on a capital of one hundred millions," divided into shares of five hundred livres, payable in state-notes, then at a discount of seventy per cent. Law saw no inconvenience in this deficit, and provided, he said, that the four per cent. interest on the state-notes were faithfully paid by the Exchequer, he undertook not only to absorb a hundred millions of these in his enterprise, but to raise the remainder of that paper to par. The formation of the company was resolved upon, and letters patent were issued towards the end of August, 1717. The only burden imposed upon the company was that of rendering fidelity and homage to the king of France, in token of vassalage; in fact, the major part of North America was converted by a stroke of the pen into a fief of the French crown, by people whose idea of its position and extent was of the haziest possible kind. Important privileges were conferred with the ease and liberality invariably displayed when the property of others is concerned. For twenty-four years from January, 1718, the company was invested with the monopoly of all possible trade, comprising the sale of Canadian furs, the perpetual and irrevocable grant of all lands, watercourses, mines, forests, and islands (yet undiscovered!) dependent on Louisiana; the right of selling, alienating, and cultivating these properties without paying any rent to the mother-country; and the right of arming and equipping a navy in war time. It was further provided that the colonists should be exempted from all taxes "injurious to the expansion of the new settlement"—a magnificently loose definition—and that the state-notes supplied to form the capital should be converted into perpetual annuities. A curious illustration of the spirit of the time is provided by the clauses enacting that "foreigners" were not forbidden to take shares in the enterprise, and that "any one could become a shareholder without detracting from his rank or titles."

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* All the Year Round, New Series, Vol. 6, p. 179; Vol. 11, p. 421.

Law's promise to raise to par and to sustain the value of state-notes had been publicly made; and some months after the conversion of the General into a Royal Bank, he began to feel that it was time to make a stroke. Nothing had been done with the Western Company. The shares had been taken up merely because they could be paid for in paper which was almost useless. Suddenly Law gave an impulse to his company by purchasing at par, or even at a premium, at six months' date, shares which were then at a discount of fifty per cent. There was a rush to buy, and the shares rose to par at once. Law saw his opportunity, and in the month of May, 1719, obtained a decree amalgamating the existing Eastern and Western Companies, &c., into a new "Indian Company." To the privileges and monopolies already granted to the Western Company were added the sole privilege of trading from Guinea to the Japanese Archipelago, of colonising especially the Cape of Good Hope, the East Coast of Africa, all the known islands of the Pacific, Persia, the Mogul Empire, the kingdom of Siam, China, Japan, and South America. The concession included the exclusive right of importing from these countries all products, natural or manufactured, not prohibited in France. Those who know the history of the English and Dutch East India Companies may be amused to find that the Mississippi was the backbone of a scheme which included many privileges of real value, but the East Indies were just then in bad odour. Colbert's Company had benefited nobody but the directors. Shareholders were sore and savage, and completely "disillusioned" concerning the East, but the Mississippi country had the advantage of being entirely unknown. It was not difficult to people its virgin solitudes with untold treasures. Several modes of puffing were resorted to. Engravings were circulated showing the arrival of the French at the Mississippi, surrounded by male and female savages displaying every sign of respect and admiration. "There are seen," said the accompanying description, "mountains full of gold and silver, copper, lead, and quicksilver. As these metals are very common, and the savages know nothing of their value, they exchange lumps of gold and silver for European manufactures, such as knives, cooking utensils, spindles, a small looking-glass, or even a little brandy." Factories employing hundreds and thousands of Indian women were turning out immense quantities of silk. Ingots of Mississippi silver were going to be assayed at the mint. A rock of emerald had been found in Arkansas. Unfortunately for some of these tales of the wealth of Mississippi, there was in Paris a man who had been there. Lamothe Cadillac, an old soldier, formerly employed in Louisiana, did not hesitate to tell the truth about that remarkable country, and was laid by the heels in the Bastille for his pains. Judging from the description of the French, the "awful solitudes" of Louisiana consisted of a scarcely habitable "desert," desolated by fevers and infested with savages. It seems to be a fact that, when Crozat made over the viceroyalty to the Western Company, there were but four or five hundred whites and twenty blacks in all Louisiana, but after 1718 Law sent out the engineer Delatour, at the head of a band of workmen, and laid the foundation of New Orleans in honour of the Regent. In France the company bought Belle Isle as a depôt, and built the fort of Lorient.

As the shares of the Western Company had produced no specie, Law proceeded under authority to issue new shares of the Indian Company—fifty thousand of five hundred francs each, payable in specie, and by twentieths, monthly, with a discount of ten per cent. on paying in full at the time of allotment—a combination which placed in the directors' power twenty-seven and a half millions of francs in silver. While the parliament of Paris was hesitating over the registration of the edict, the original shares purchased with state-notes rose to one hundred and thirty. Law's promise was already performed, but as if to pile wonder upon wonder, he obtained a new decree, in which it was said that, in consequence of the high value of the shares recently issued—the "Indian Company" shares—it was just to establish a general rule, which should be susceptible of no favour; that, consequently, no one should be allowed to take up these new shares without possessing a sum of old shares—of the "Western Company"—four times larger than that for which he now wished to subscribe. Thus, to obtain ten shares of the new or Indian series, it was necessary to possess forty "Westerns." The public called the latter Mothers, and the "Indians," Daughters. Each of these "daughters," adds M. Crochut, "brought her dowry with her; when you had obtained her by means of five hundred and fifty livres, you could immediately derive from her, from hand to hand, a profit which doubled and tripled the investment." The rush was enormous, the mothers were eagerly bought up in order to secure the daughters, and when no more daughters were to be found, the mothers were sought for at any price. The excitement was kept up by skilfully adding from time to time fresh fields to the company's already ample domain. In 1719 the company bought a monopoly of tobacco. It shortly became known that they farmed the salt mines of Alsace and Franche-Comté. Enthusiasm rose higher and higher. They offered to pay the pensions and other debts of the State, for a discount of three per cent. They next undertook the collection of taxes gathered directly by the Exchequer, and the next move was to purchase the right of coining money from the king, for nine years, for fifty millions of livres. The shares doubled in value, and the opportunity was seized to "water the stock," which appeared to get richer the more it was diluted. To pay the capital of fifty millions promised to the State, it was necessary to create new shares, and a decree of the Council authorised the company to issue fifty thousand of them. The nation went mad after the "granddaughters," as the new shares were called, and this furore again raised the value of the mothers and grandmothers. The rise on the shares of the Indian Company reached two hundred per cent., while the state-notes and all the depreciated paper of the former reign rose to par.

To the historian of to-day, looking back at the great Mississippi Scheme through a long vista of financial bubbles of every size and hue, it would seem that in Law's mind there existed no scheme—properly called so—at all. As the gigantic undertaking, or rather series of undertakings, unfolds itself, the want of an originally cosmic idea becomes apparent. Law, like many men who have made a figure in the world, really worked from hand to mouth, barely keeping pace with the natural growth of his work. One by one the financial departments of the State were absorbed into his immense enterprise. In the beginning of September the Indian Company offered to take on lease the farms of the revenues granted the previous year to Aimon Lambert, and to lend to the king, at three per cent., a sum of twelve hundred millions to pay off the different creditors of the State. This plan combined popularity with revenge. Law became the idol of the people, and enjoyed the pleasure of paying off the debt of the country and his private score against the Brothers Pâris, who, trading as Aimon Lambert, were nicknamed the Four Sons of Aymon. To realise the twelve hundred millions which it offered to pay the king, the company issued more shares, and eventually raising its offers to fifteen hundred millions, in order to extinguish, together with the annuities, whatever remained of state-notes, issued still more shares, until what with the mothers, daughters, grand-daughters, and the "State Loan," the Indian Company had issued six hundred and twenty-four thousand shares, of five hundred livres each, representing three hundred and twelve millions; but, profiting by the rise in the value of the stock, it had sold them for nearly eighteen hundred millions. To pay the dividend on this enormous sum, Law calculated on an income from all sources of eighty-two millions, sufficient to pay a splendid dividend on the nominal capital, but hardly a remunerative return to the purchasers who had bought their shares, not for five hundred, but for five thousand livres.

At the issue of the new shares, Paris, and, for that matter, France, went mad, and every artifice was employed to keep the excitement up to fever pitch. Shares were sold by auction, and were delivered at the company's hotel. The Rue Vivienne and the adjacent streets were filled with a tumultuous and furious crowd. All sorts and conditions of men crowded to the front, armed with bags of coin or well-lined pocket-books, and each man scowled on his neighbour as an obstacle between him and fortune. Neither sleep, hunger, nor thirst could arrest them, till the fatal news arrived that the last share had been delivered, when the seething crowd vanished at once. Those who had been happy enough to secure shares made their way quickly enough to the Rue Quincampoix—the theatre of scenes like those in Change-alley during the South Sea Bubble, and in Capel-court while the railway mania prevailed. This Rue Quincampoix had been formed originally by the pleasure-houses of the bankers. By degrees it became the centre of the trade in State and commercial paper—ticklish securities enough in the latter days of Louis the Fourteenth, but attractive to those speculators who preferred a big risk for a big profit to the more modest but certain reward of regular industry. A brisk trade in money-lending was carried on. As there are to-day many financiers without finances, so were there bankers in 1719 who, being totally destitute of capital, carried on business by means of "loans by the clock;" that is to say, that at the moment of concluding the bargain, they rushed off to some money-lender, who entrusted them with the necessary cash at the rate of a quarter per cent. per quarter of an hour, a rate which would astound even that pleasant West-end financial agent who knows nothing of figures, nor percentages either, but thinks a shilling a month for the loan of a sovereign a comfortable rate of interest, easy to compute without interest tables. In 1719 the "street," as it was called, was a narrow passage, about a hundred and fifty feet long by five or six wide, terminating at one end in the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, and at the other in the Rue aux Ours. As the increasing concourse of people intercepted traffic, the street was transformed into a kind of exchange by enclosing it at its two extremities with gates, open for the public from morning till night. It was found necessary to forbid nocturnal meetings, as the noise banished sleep from the neighbourhood. In the daytime the crush was tremendous, the busy crowd overflowing into the neighbouring streets, filling the cook-shops and the coffee-shops, and buying any food at any price in order to secure a place. Persons of quality—terribly in want of money—jostled by footmen, and bishops, and dainty abbés; men of the sword, men of the robe, men of the pen, and men of the shop made up a motley crowd, shouting, quarrelling, buying and selling, cursing, swearing, and scrambling over the mushroom wealth of the new Company of the Indies. Thither came that exemplary nobleman, the Marquis of Carabas, delighting in his blue blood and proud of his seigniorial rights, his right of exemption from taxation, his right to keep a thousand or so of pigeons in a gigantic pigeon-house, and his right to let the said birds eat up his vassals' crops, together with other rights which it is needless to specify. The worthy marquis had been hard hit of late, and, having got the concession of a lot of shares from the successful Scotchman, would of course be anxious to realise them. Younger men, the roués of the period, also played heavily on the "street." The Chevalier de Bric-à-Brac and the Viscount Sanspareil were there, of course, early in the morning, not very sober, having been up drinking all night, but having plenty to say to the female speculators who crowded the offices of the "street" itself and the Rue aux Ours. Footmen were said to be particularly lucky among the male speculators, as were cooks and chambermaids among women.

In November the price of shares rose, after some fluctuations, to ten thousand livres, and the destinies of France appeared shut in the narrow limit of the "street." Other business was neglected, and even grave physicians were afflicted with the Mississippi mania, which had outgrown Mississippi altogether. M. Chirac, principal physician to the Regent, on his way to visit a female patient, having been informed that the price of shares was falling, was so affected by the news that he could think of nothing else; and, accordingly, while feeling the lady's pulse, kept muttering, "Oh, mon Dieu! it falls—it falls!" The invalid, frightened almost out of her wits, began to ring the bell with all her might, and was just on the point of fainting with terror, when the doctor explained that there was nothing the matter with her pulse, and that he was thinking only of the market. M. de la Mothe and the Abbé Terrasson, two of the best scholars in France, met one evening, and, discoursing very solemnly on the madness of speculation, congratulated themselves very heartily that, whatever might happen to others, men of erudition were, at least, free from the prevailing epidemic. A week later, they met in the Rue Quincampoix!

Enriched by the sudden rise in the value of shares, many insignificant persons emerged for awhile from their native obscurity, and many odd stories were told of their behaviour. A fortunate footman made so much money that he provided himself with a fine carriage; but, the first day it came to the door, he, instead of getting inside, jumped up behind from the force of habit. Law's own coachman made so great a fortune that he retired from service; and the sometime cook-maid to a person of quality appeared in public with so magnificent an equipage, that her envious friends said she "had tumbled from a garret into a carriage." Another lucky speculator, finding himself all at once rich beyond his wildest dreams, hastened to a coachmaker and ordered a carriage to be made in "the best style," lined with the richest crimson velvet and adorned with gold fringe. As he was departing, the coachmaker ran after him, to inquire what arms were to be put on the carriage, and was told, "Oh, the finest—the finest, by all means." Everybody made money, from the fortunate Madame Chaumont, down to the Ducs de Bourbon and d'Antin. Boundless extravagance was the fashion of the hour. One Mississippian, who had formerly been "a landscape painter," owned more than three millions' worth of precious stones, without reckoning the beautiful diamond of the Count de Nocé, which he bought for half a million, and a girdle-buckle, which he bought of a Jew for a like sum. The enriched artist, not content with a silver and silver-gilt service weighing four thousand marcs, carried off from the jeweller's that which had been made for the king of Portugal, whose agents had not been ready with their cash. His cooking utensils were of silver, and the furniture of his house of the most magnificent kind. He had eighty horses in his stable, and ninety servants; and, curiously enough, anticipated the "lady and gentlemen help" idea. We are gravely told, that among his crowd of domestics were "four young ladies, as chambermaids, and four footmen of birth very superior to that of their master."

While the fortunate gamblers were thus disporting themselves, Law, to do him justice, was occupied—when he could escape from his innumerable suitors—in the grave and invidious task of abolishing the thousands of useless officials, who had been called into existence by the necessities of the preceding reign. Many vexatious taxes were abolished. Public works rose apace: the bridge of Blois was built, the canal of Burgundy constructed, and it would seem that the idea of transforming Paris into a seaport was entertained by Law. Buvat says, "They are working at a canal at Elbœuf, by means of which they expect to make the tide of the sea flow up the Seine to within a short distance of Paris, so as to render the river more navigable." On every side reigned prosperity and progress. A glow of health had been infused into a country for years before on the verge of wretchedness. Law was worshipped as the saviour of France.

This golden age lasted about eight

months, from June, 1719, to February, 1720. The first blow came from abroad. Among the foreign speculators in Mississippi stock were many quite astute enough to see that, at the market prices of December, the probable returns, admitting the success of every operation, would scarcely have given one per cent.—a proof that the shares were at a ridiculously false price. In December the realisers, as they were called, commenced their operations. Making a "pool" among themselves, they forced up the prices for a fortnight, keeping shares at between eighteen and twenty thousand livres each. They then began to "unload," and got rid of the whole of their stock at an enormous profit. The plan was so well managed that no panic occurred; but its effect was intensified by the most opulent French Mississippians, who took the alarm and hastened to sell. All these stockjobbers, throwing their shares at once into the market of the Rue Quincampoix, rushed with the proceeds in notes to the Bank, to exchange them for silver. To parry this run, Law issued, in the course of a few months, no fewer than thirty-three edicts, decrees, and declarations, to fix the price of gold and silver, and arbitrarily control the circulation. These efforts only increased the general distrust. The depreciation of specie no longer stopped the realisers, whose margin of profit was so enormous that they could afford a discount of twenty-five per cent. without flinching. Meanwhile the efforts made to bolster up the falling shares only assisted the great holders in "unloading" gradually, without actually producing a "break" in the market. The realisers hardly knew what to do with their money. Foreigners made off, carrying away with them untold millions in specie. Frenchmen bought houses, castles, landed estates—anything, in short, at any price, rather than remain saddled with notes, gold, and silver, the value of which fluctuated every hour. Forestallers rushed into the markets, and bought up groceries, tallow, and even books. One stock-jobber, named Lagrange, bought an entire edition of Bayle's Dictionary. In the early part of 1720 the gloom was increased by the reckless acts of the company in procuring emigrants for Mississippi. Backed by the authority of the Regent, they began by sweeping the prisons of their male and female inhabitants, marrying them by lot, and shipping them off. As fast as these were shipwrecked, died of fever, or were killed off by the Indians, fresh supplies were sent off. Girls of suspected character were torn from their homes, and packed off with the vilest malefactors—as Manon Lescaut was torn from the unhappy Desgrieux. To arrest the suspected persons who were to people the colony, a regiment of archers was raised by the company, of whom each received, besides his kit, twenty sous a day pay, and a pistole for every person arrested. These ruffians, nicknamed the "Bandoliers of the Mississippi," would have arrested a saint for half the money. Bravely attired in blue and silver, and armed with sword, gun, bayonet, and pistols, they scoured Paris in search of victims. To them all were guilty. It was sufficient to slip a purse into an archer's hand, and whisper a word in his ear, to get rid of an enemy for good and all. At last, the disappearance of so many people, especially young girls, occasioned a popular outbreak, ending in a score of the archers being killed on the spot, and a much larger number dangerously wounded. Evil news arrived from the colony. It became known that most of the women sent forcibly there soon died of disease or despair. The men formed connections with the native women; one of whom, the Queen of Missouri, of the Race of the Sun, came over to Paris. There was one disadvantage about this lady: it was that she possessed in her own land the right of putting her husband to death. Nevertheless, a brave and handsome sergeant of the guards, named Dubois, married her, after she had been baptised at Notre Dame with great ceremony. The happy pair went back to Mississippi; but King Dubois, happening to disagree with his bride, was at once done to death and, it is said, eaten. In the meantime the value of shares declined, and, despite the restrictions on the use of specie, the Prince de Conti drew three cartloads of crown-pieces out of the Bank, and the Duc de Bourbon an immense sum. The difficulty of a falling market began to be experienced. Unfortunate speculators took to the highway, or, like Count Horn and his companions, carried robbery and murder into the "street" itself. These noble gentlemen decoyed an unhappy broker, named Lacroix, into the "Wooden Sword" tavern, asked for a private room, breakfasted, poniarded their victim, and carried off a great booty. One of the assassins escaped, but the Count Horn—a descendant of the famous Count Horn, executed with Count Egmont by the Duke of Alva—was taken, and, in spite of every effort made by his illustrious connections, was broken alive on the wheel on Tuesday, 26th March, 1720. Many other robberies and murders took place, while the whole country was disorganised by the renewal of domiciliary visits in search of specie held in contravention of a recent edict, which prohibited any person keeping, without special permission, more than five hundred livres in cash.

Towards June a downright panic set in. The Duc de Broglie told Law that he would end with a halter, and a wager was laid in London that the hanging would take place not later than September. The scenes before the doors of the Bank were alarming, and a strong force of soldiers was required to protect it. People were crushed to death endeavouring to reach the entrance. Desperate riots took place. In one of these, Law's carriage was stopped by a woman, whose husband had been killed in the morning. She was crying for "Vengeance!" Law sprang out, and, with the cool contempt of an old duellist, said to those who were attacking him, "You are all canaille," and majestically walked through them into the Palais-Royal. His coachman, however, who ventured to assume the grand airs of his master when driving off, was killed by the mob, and the carriage smashed to atoms. By December Law's position was no longer tenable, as it became only too clear that his head would be the price of reconciliation between the Regent and the exasperated people. On the 12th he showed himself at the Opera, no longer pursued by a crowd of admirers, but an object of curiosity to those who looked upon him as a doomed man. Cool and contemptuous as ever, he disdained to notice the sensation he produced. A week later he was in Brussels.

Of the large fortune he brought into France, and fourteen estates he had purchased there, he had but thirty-six thousand livres left, and a couple of diamond rings worth ten thousand crowns a piece, one of which he presented to Madame de Prie out of gratitude for her having procured him a passport in the king's name. During his subsequent residence in England he appears to have received subsidies from the Regent from time to time; but, being unable to recover any important part of his once large capital, he finally left England and settled in Venice, where he lived by play, then and there esteemed as honourable as any other pursuit. He left, at his death in 1729, only a few pictures and his diamond ring, which he was accustomed to pledge when there was a run of luck against his faro bank.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLIX.

The days passed by and brought no letter, in answer to Castalia's, from Lord Seely. Dreary were the hours in Ivy Lodge. The wife was devoured by passionate jealousy and a vain yearning for affection; the husband found that even the bright, smooth, hard metal of his own character was not impervious to the corrosive action of daily cares, regrets, and apprehensions. Algernon was not apt to hate. He usually perceived the absurd side of persons who were obnoxious to him with too keen an amusement to detest them; and the inmost feeling of his heart with respect to his fellow-creatures in general approached, perhaps, as nearly to perfect indifference as it is given to a mortal to attain. But it was not possible to preserve a condition of indifference towards Castalia. She was a thorn in his flesh, a mote in his eye, a weariness to his spirit; and he began to dislike the very sight of the sallow, sickly face, red-eyed too often, and haggard with discontent, that met his view whenever he was in his own home. It was the daily worry of it, he told himself, that was unendurable. It was the being shut up with her in a box like Ivy Lodge, where there was no room for them to get away from each other. If he could have shared a mansion in Grosvenor-square with Castalia, he might have got on with her well enough! But then, that mansion in Grosvenor-square would have made so many things different in his life.

At length one day came a letter to Castalia, with the London post-mark and sealed with the well-known coat of arms, but it did not bear Lord Seely's frank. Another name was scrawled in the corner, and the direction was written in Lady Seely's crooked, cramped little characters.

"I'm afraid Uncle Val must be ill!" exclaimed Castalia, opening the letter with a trembling hand. She was so weak and nervous now that the most trifling agitation made her heart beat painfully. My lady's epistle was not long, and, as a knowledge of its contents is essential to the due comprehension of this story, it is given in full, with her ladyship's own phraseology and orthography:—

"My dear Castalia,—I cannot think what on earth you are about to write such letters to your uncle. Go abroad indeed! I suppose Ancram would like the embassy to St. Petersburg, or to be governor of the Ionian Islands. It's all nonsense, and you had better put such ideas out of your head at once, and for all. I should think you might know that we have other people to think of besides your husband, specially after all we have done for him. Your uncle is very ill in bed with an attack of the gout, and can't write himself. The doctor thinks he won't be about again for weeks. You can guess what trouble this throws on to my shoulders, so I hope you won't worry me by any more such letters as the last. As if there was not anxiety enough, Fido had a fit on Thursday. I hope you are pretty well. What a blessing you've no sign of a family. With only you two to keep, you ought to do very well on Ancram's salary, and you can tell him I say so. Yours affectionately, B. Seely."

"Poor Uncle Val!" exclaimed Castalia, dropping the letter from her hand. "I was afraid he was ill."

"Pshaw! A touch of the gout won't kill him," said Algernon, who had been reading over her shoulder. "But it's deuced unfortunate for me that he should be laid up at this time, and quite helpless in the hands of that old catamaran."

"Poor Uncle Val! Perhaps he never got my letter at all."

"Nothing more likely, if my lady could prevent his getting it."

"Perhaps, when he gets better, I can write to him again, and ask him——"

"When he gets better? Oh yes, certainly. We have plenty of time. There is no hurry, of course!"

"I see that you are speaking satirically, Ancram, but I don't know why."

Her husband shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the room. As he left the house he was met at the garden-gate by a bright-eyed, consumptive-looking lad, in shabby working clothes, who touched his cap, and held out a paper to Algernon. "What do you want?" asked the latter. "Mr. Gladwish, sir. His account, if you please, sir."

"And who the devil is Mr. Gladwish?"

"The shoemaker, sir."

"Oh! Mr. Gladwish, then, is an extremely importunate, impatient, troublesome fellow. This is the third or fourth time within a very few weeks that he has sent in his bill. I'm not accustomed to that sort of thing. I don't understand it. Don't give me the paper, boy. Take it into the house."

"Please, sir," began the lad, and stopped, hesitatingly. Then seeing that Mr. Errington was walking off without taking any further notice of him, he repeated in a louder, firmer tone, "Please, sir, Mr. Gladwish is really in want of the money. He has two of the children bad with fever. And I was to say that even five pounds on account would be acceptable."

"Five pounds! He's too modest. I haven't got five pounds, nor five minutes. I'm busy."

"Then I'm sorry to say, sir, that Mr. Gladwish will take legal proceedings for the debt at once. He told me to tell you so."

"Nice state of things!" muttered Algernon, as he walked towards the post-office, with his head bent down and his hands deep in his pockets. "But that's nothing. It's those cursed bills in Maxfield's hands that are on my mind like lead."

His spirits were not lightened by that which awaited him at the office. He had to undergo an interview with the district surveyor, who was very grave, not to say severe, in speaking of the irregularities which had been complained of, and were looked on as very serious at the head office. The surveyor ended by plainly hinting his hope that persons having no business at the office would be strictly forbidden from having access to it at abnormal hours. "I—I don't understand you," stammered Algernon.

"Mr. Errington," said the surveyor, "I am speaking to you, not officially, but confidentially, and as man to man. I have been having a little conversation with Mr. Gibbs—who seems to have none but good feeling towards you, but who—in short, I think it is not needful to be more explicit. I advise you in all friendliness to be stern and decisive in keeping every person out of this office except such as have recognised business to be here. If further trouble arises, I shall have to do my duty, and make my report without respect of any persons whatsoever."

"Perhaps," said Algernon, who was white to his lips, but otherwise apparently unmoved, "perhaps it would be best for me to resign my post here at once. If the authorities above me find cause for dissatisfaction——"

"I can give you no advice as to that, Mr. Errington. You must know your own affairs better than I do."

"There are things which a man can scarcely say even to himself; considerations which are painful as they float dimly in one's own mind, but which would be unendurable uttered aloud in words. Anything like a public scandal—or—or—disgrace, to me, would involve a large circle of persons—many of them persons of rank and consideration in the world. You are possibly aware that—my wife"—there was a peculiar tone in Algernon's voice as he said those two words—"is a niece of Lord Seely?"

But the official gentleman declined to enter into the question of Mr. Errington's family connections. "Oh," said he coldly, "we must hope there will be no question of scandal or disgrace." Then he went away, leaving Algernon in a chaos of doubt as to whether he should, or should not, speak further on the subject to Obadiah Gibbs. Obadiah Gibbs, however, decided the question for him. He came into Algernon's room, closing the door carefully behind him, and asked to speak a few words in private. Algernon was sitting in the luxurious easy-chair which he had had carried into the office for his own use. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon of a dull November day. The single window which looked on to a white-washed court threw a ghastly pallid light on Algernon's face, as he sat opposite to it, with his head thrown back against the cushions of the high chair. Mr. Gibbs was touched with compassion at seeing how changed the bright young face looked, since he had first been acquainted with it. And yet, in truth, the change was not a very deep one; it was more in colouring, and the expression of the moment, than in any lines which care had graven.

"Come in, Gibbs; come in," said Algernon, with his affable air. The clerk seemed the more anxious and disturbed of the two. He sat down on the chair Algernon pointed out to him, in a constrained posture, and seemed to have some difficulty in beginning to speak, albeit not a man usually liable to embarrassment of manner. His superior stretched his feet out nearer to the hearth, and slightly moved his white hand to and fro, looking, as a child might have done, at the glitter of a ring he wore in the firelight.

"Mr. Wing did not seem very well pleased, sir," said Gibbs, after clearing his throat.

"Of course he had to appear displeased, whether he was or not, Gibbs. A little hocus-pocus, a little official solemnity, is the thing to assume, I suppose. I think that man's nose is the very longest I ever saw. Remarkable nose, eh, Gibbs?"

"But, sir," continued Gibbs, declining to discuss the surveyor's nose, "he said that from inquiries that had been made, it's pretty certain that the missing letters were—stolen—they must have been stolen—at Whitford."

"Very intelligent on the part of the official, Mr. Wing! Only I think you and I had come to pretty nearly the same conclusion before."

"He made strict inquiries about the people in the office here, and I had to give him what information I could, sir."

"Of course, of course, Gibbs! I quite understand," said Algernon, putting his hand out to shake that of the clerk with so frank a cordiality, that the latter felt the tears spring into his eyes, as he took the cool white hand into his own. "I have felt very much for you, Mr. Errington," said he. "Your position is a trying one, indeed. I would do almost anything in my power to set your mind more at rest. But I'm sorry to say that I have an unpleasant matter to speak of."

"I wonder," thought Algernon, leaning back in his chair once more, "whether my friend Obadiah conceives our conversation hitherto to have been of an agreeable and entertaining nature, that he now announces something unpleasant by way of a change!"

"You will understand," said Gibbs, "that I am speaking to you in the strictest confidence. I should be sorry for it to come out that I had meddled. Nor, sir, would it be well for you to have it known that I gave you any warning."

"I wish the old bore would not be so confoundedly long-winded!" thought Algernon, nodding meanwhile with an air of thoughtful attention.

But Gibbs was prone to long-windedness, and to the making of speeches. And he now availed himself of the opportunity of haranguing the postmaster to the fullest extent. But the gist of what he had to say was this: Roger Heath, the man whose money-letter had been lost, now declared that his correspondent at Bristol, being interrogated in the hope that he might be able to furnish some clue to the identification of the missing notes, stated that he remembered one was endorsed in blue ink instead of black; and that he, Heath, had reason to know that one of the notes paid by young Mrs. Errington to Ravell, the mercer, had been endorsed in blue ink!

"Now, sir," proceeded Gibbs, "I remember its being a good deal talked of in the town at the time, that young Mrs. Errington had money unknown to you, and Mrs. Ravell spoke of it to many."

"Damn Mrs. Ravell! What does it all mean, Gibbs?"

Algernon got up from his chair, and leant his elbows on the chimney-piece, and hid his face in his hands, but he so stood that he could watch the clerk's countenance between his fingers. That countenance expressed trouble and compassion. Gibbs got up too, and stood looking at Algernon and shaking his head ruefully.

"I thought it well you should know what was being said, Mr. Errington," said he.

"What can I do, Gibbs? How can I stop their cursed tongues?" Algernon still spoke with his face hidden.

"No, sir, you cannot stop their tongues, but—you might possibly put a stop to what sets their tongues going. Of course, the matter may be all explained simply enough. There may be plenty of bank-notes endorsed in blue ink——"

"Of course there may! Chattering idiots!"

"And as to that particular note, Mr. Ravell paid it away, as well as the others Mrs. Errington gave him, to the agent of a Manchester house he deals with, the next day after it came into his hands. I ascertained that from Ravell himself."

"I'll have the note traced!" exclaimed Algernon, looking up for the first time.

"That would be a difficult matter, sir. It has gone far and wide before now."

"I tell you I will have it traced! And I will have that malignant scoundrel, Heath, pulled up pretty sharply, if he dares to make any more insinuations that——it is not difficult to see what he is driving at!"

Gibbs laid his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"I feel for you, Mr. Errington," he said. "If I did not, I shouldn't put myself in the disagreeable position of saying what I have said. I should have attended to my own business, and let matters take their course. I hope you believe that I had only a kind motive in speaking?"

"I do believe it—heartily!"

"Thank you, sir. Then I shall make bold to give you one word of advice. Don't stir in the matter, nor make any threats against any one, until you have ascertained from Mrs. Errington where she got the notes that she paid to Ravell."

Algernon had bent down his head again, and he now answered without looking up:

"No doubt Mrs. Errington can account for them to me, but she is not bound to do so to any one else. Nor can I allow any one to hint that she is so bound. I should be a blackguard if I could listen to a word of that sort."

"I hope it may come right, Mr. Errington. After all, there has been nothing to hurt you, and, so far as I see, there can be nothing, but talk."

"My good fellow," said Algernon, as he once more gave his hand to his clerk, "it's a kind of talk which poisons a man's life. You know that as well as I do."

Then Gibbs took his leave of his superior, and went back into the outer office. As he sat at his desk there his mind was full of sympathy with Algernon Errington. "Poor young man! He took it beautifully. It must be a terrible blow—an awful blow. But, no doubt, he has had his suspicions before now. What a warning against worldly-mindedness! He is a victim to that vain and godless woman; and that's all that comes of the marriage that so uplifted the heart of his mother. But he would be a beautiful character, if he had only got religion, and would leave off profane swearing. He is so guileless and outspoken, like a child, almost. Ah, poor young man! I hope the Lord may bless this trial to him. But—religion or no religion—I don't believe he'll ever be fit to be postmaster of Whitford." Thus ran the reflections of Mr. Obadiah Gibbs.

When Algernon reached home that evening, he bade Lydia put up a few things for him into a little travelling valise; and when he met his wife at the dinner-table, he told her he should go up to London that night by the mail-coach. He explained, in answer to her surprised inquiries, lamentations, and objections, uttered in a querulous drawl, that he must get help from Lord Seely; that it was useless to write to him under the present circumstances, seeing that his wife would probably intercept the letter; and that, therefore, he had resolved to go to town himself and obtain a personal interview with Lord Seely.

"But, Ancram!—what's the use? Why on earth should you fly off in this way? I'm sure it won't do! Do you suppose for an instant that Aunt Belinda will let you get at him?"

"I must try for it. Things have got to that pass now, that—— Do you know what happened to me just as I went out after lunch? Gladwish, the shoemaker, sent to threaten me with arrest! I shall be walked off to prison, I suppose, for a few wretched pairs of abominable shoes, The fellow has no more notion of fitting my foot than a farrier."

"To prison! Oh, Ancram! But Gladwish's bill cannot be so very large——"

"Of course it's not 'so very large!'"

"Then, if we paid it, or even part of it——"

"Paid it! Upon my word, Cassy, you are too absurd! 'Paid it!' In the first place, I have only a very few pounds in the house—barely enough to take me to town, I think; and, in the next place, if I paid Gladwish, what would be the result? The butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker would all be down on me with summonses, and writs, and executions, and bedevilments of every imaginable kind. But you have no more notion—you take it all so coolly. 'Paid it!' By George! Cassy, it's very hard to stand such nonsense!"

Castalia withdrew from the table, and sat down on the little sofa and cried. Her husband looked at her across a glass of very excellent sherry, which he was just about to hold up to the light. "I think, Castalia," he said, "I really do think, that when a man is in such trouble as I am, reduced to the brink of ruin, not knowing which way to turn for a ten-pound note, struggling, striving, bothering his brains to find a way out of the confounded mess, he might expect something more cheering and encouraging from his wife than perpetual snivelling." With that he cracked a filbert with a sharp jerk of indignation. But Algernon's forte was not the minatory or impressively wrathful style of eloquence. He could hurl a sarcasm, sharp, light, and polished; but when he came to wielding such a ponderous weapon as serious reproof on moral considerations, he was apt to make a poor hand of it. It was excessively disagreeable, too, to see that woman's thin shoulders moving convulsively under her gay-coloured dress, as she sobbed with her head buried in the sofa cushion. That really must be put a stop to. So, as it appeared evident that scolding would not quench the tears, he tried coaxing. The coaxing was not so efficacious as it would have been once. Still, Castalia responded to it to the extent of endeavouring to check the sobs which still shook her frail chest and throat. "When shall you be back, Ancram?" she said, looking beseechingly at him. He answered that he hoped to be in Whitford again on Tuesday night, or Wednesday at the latest (it was then Monday); and he particularly impressed on her the necessity of telling any one who might inquire the cause of his absence, that he had been suddenly called up to town by the illness of Lord Seely. He had, in fact, said a word or two to that effect when, on his way home, he had ordered the fly, which was to carry him and his valise to the coach-office. Castalia insisted on accompanying him to the coach, despite the damp cold of the night, a proceeding which he did not much combat, since he felt it would serve to give colour to his statement to the landlord of the Blue Bell.

"Keep up your spirits, Cassy," he cried, waving his hand from the coach-window as he stood in the inn yard, muffled in shawls and furs. "I hope I shall bring back good news of your uncle."

Then Castalia was trundled back to Ivy Lodge in the jingling old fly, whilst her husband rolled swiftly behind four fleet horses towards London.

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK I. CHAPTER III. THE MAN.

ON the opposite side of the house from that on which John Pemberton's study and the sitting-rooms were situated, but also opening on a spacious verandah, and overlooking a flower-garden bounded by fine trees, was Mrs. Pemberton's sleeping apartment. Half an hour after she left the sick man and his nurse for the night, we find her sitting by the open window; a small table, on which a shaded lamp stands, by her side; and spread out before her gaze the still, solemn beauty of the garden, and its boundary of thick trees, under the light of the moon and the diamond stars, which hang in the steel-blue space, globes of light, as they do not hang in our misty heavens on this side of the world. The scene is supremely calm and beautiful, and the still air is scented with the subtle odours which the night extracts from the trees and the earth. Mrs. Pemberton has folded a scarlet shawl round her shoulders, and her rich dark hair is smoothly rolled at the back of her head. She is a very fair woman to look upon, a beautiful central object in that peaceful and lovely scene. So her husband thinks, when he joins her, presently, and at her bidding takes his place at the window too.

"Are you very tired, John?" she asks him.

"No, love, not particularly. It has been a busy day, though."

"Did you get your letters and papers sent off?"

"Yes, fortunately. I had taken the parcel for Meredith down to the coach, in fact, when the accident happened."

"So that they are quite off your mind?"

"Yes, quite. If this unfortunate thing had not occurred, I should have felt very light-hearted to-night, for everything is going as well as I could wish. I think you will approve of something that I have done, Mary, and I must tell you, even though in so doing I run counter to your one weakness."

"What is that?" she asked, with a rather uneasy smile.

"Your dislike to my mentioning my will. You never would let me talk to you, and consult you about it, you know, like a rational being taking the opinion of his best friend, and so I have had to draw up the document without the benefit of your advice."

"I—I would rather not know what it contains," said Mrs. Pemberton. "I confess it, John, I am superstitious about a will at any time, and my nerves are not over strong to-night. Please don't tell me anything. It is enough for me to know that your will is made."

"Very well then, I will only tell you this one thing. I have named my brother-in-law as co-guardian of Ida with yourself. I have written to inform him that I have done so, and I have requested Meredith to forward the document to him in advance of our arrival in England."

"And why?"

"Why? Because, my love, life is always uncertain, though I don't think, as I am sure you do, that it is endangered by the making of a will: my mind will be quite easy about you and Ida when I know that he is in possession of my wishes and intentions respecting you.

When one is taking so serious a step as that which we have resolved upon, it makes one look at everything, hold a general review and grand parade in fact, and a very good thing it is to do so. You don't object to the arrangement, do you?"

"Certainly not. I should be very glad to have the advice and assistance of anyone whom you esteem and trust, if I should have the great misfortune to survive you. And it would be well for Ida, I am sure. But that will never be, dear John. God is too merciful."

She was strangely moved, and trembling.

He saw it, and said, very cheerfully and fondly:

"There, dearest, you have swallowed your dose, and that is all about it. I should not have liked to do this without telling you, but there's an end of the matter, and of our talk too, for it is very late. What a lovely night! We shall not have such skies and stars in England."

He stepped outside the window and stood on the verandah. His wife touched him on his arm.

"Just one question more, John. Supposing we were both gone, what provision have you made in that case for Ida's future?"

"In that case, her uncle would be her sole guardian."

"Thank you, John; that is all I wanted to know. But now, I have something to say to you. So far from our talk having come to an end, it has only just begun."

John Pemberton, standing on the verandah, gazed in surprise at his wife. There was a strange vibration in her voice, an anxious look in her eyes, and a bright spot of colour burned in each of her cheeks.

"Of course, if you wish, love," he said; "but what can you have to say that will not keep until to-morrow, especially after so trying a day as this has been?"

His mind reverted in an instant to the thoughts which had troubled him at supper time—to the idea that there was something relative to their return to England in her heart, which she had not told him.

"Come here," she said, taking his hand, and drawing him gently towards her. "Once on a time, John, in our silly days—of courtship you know——"

"Our wise—at least my wisest days—"

"You used to like to sit upon my footstool, and hold my hands in yours. Sit there now, John, and hold my hands in yours, and let me tell you something which must be told before another day begins for either of us."

He saw that she was in earnest, and that she was troubled, and he quietly obeyed her, seating himself at her feet, and taking her hands in his.

"Is that right?" he asked her.

"That is right."

"Go on, then, and tell me whatever there is in your mind to tell me."

His clear and honest face looked up at her, full of serene confidence.

"John," she said, "I want you to carry your memory back to a day, very dear and memorable in our lives—to the day when you asked me to become your wife."

"Easily done, dear—I never forget it."

"Recall it all carefully, John. I was only a governess, and not too happy in my place, and you were a rich and influential man, whom any girl in the colony would have been thought very lucky to please. Do you remember what you said to me, John, when you asked me?"

"Of course I remember it. How should I forget? I said what it behoved me to say—that I was a middle-aged man, with a dead first love in my life, asking for the hand of a beautiful young girl. I said I must not demand too much, I must not expect a romantic passion; that I would be more than content, indeed, thrice blessed, if I should win from her the calm and true affection which makes the best happiness of home. Was it not this I said, Mary, while I claimed for myself the privilege of loving you with a deeper and stronger passion, though it was not first love, than I had ever felt before, or believed that I could feel, for a woman? Have I forgotten, Mary? Do I remember aright? Was this what I said?"

He pressed the hands he held in his, and kissed them like the lover he was still.

"That was what you said, John. Now, tell me, was not this what I said?"

Her voice faltered a little, she grew paler, and there was a tremulous motion in her hands which made him clasp them closer.

"That I could give you what you asked—the true and grateful love of all my life; the devotion of a wife to yourself—the best man I had ever known;—the care and, in so far as it could be possible for one not her mother, the love of a mother for your child. And then I told you that I, too, had had a first love; there was no danger that I should wake up some day to the discovery that the love which I could give you was not the ideal love which transforms the world, and makes the common life heaven to a woman, because I had dreamed that dream and it had vanished for ever, and left my mind's eye clear of phantasms. You remember all this, John?"

"I remember it all, Mary. And I wonder more and more why you remind me of it now."

"I will tell you soon. You answered me after a noble fashion, John—a fashion which became you, as all I have ever heard you say, or known you to do, has become you. You told me that I was none the less dear to you for the fact, and all the dearer that I had told it to you fearlessly; and you asked me only one question—was the man living? I told you that he was dead to me, by his own act—that he had preferred another to me, and was at the other side of the world with her. You remember that?"

"Yes, Mary, I remember that."

"And you have never had any misgiving or jealous notion about the man whom I had loved—who was still alive? You never fancied that I was thinking of him?"

"What a strange question, Mary. Of course I never had any such notions or thoughts. Were you not my own true wife, the blessing and delight of my life, the sunshine of my home? How should I have worried myself with such ideas? If you had remembered the man, if you had thought of him, do you imagine I should have blamed you? I had not forgotten, I don't forget now, when we are happiest, my pretty young wife, whom I once loved, as well as I could love, then; and I never supposed you had forgotten. My dear, why—why do you rake up these things now—these things that have never come to us in any way before? It seems like a morbid fancy to me, or as if there were something wrong with you. Why do you do it?"

"I will tell you soon," she repeated. "Have patience with me, and answer my questions; you will understand them by-and-by. I have asked you to look back to five years ago, and you have done so; now I only ask you to look back to—yesterday."

The clock upon the mantelpiece had rung out the hour—one—while she was speaking, and she paused to let the silvery sound pass away.

"Do you remember what you said to me about my seeming indifference to the prospect of our return to England? Do you remember what I said about my having no ties, and that all my world was here?"

"I remember."

"And you believed me when I said it?"

"Believed you, Mary? What a question! Of course."

She paused, and her gaze into his face grew deep and tender. She loosed one hand from his hold, and laid it on his head.

"John," she said, "I am going to tell you what you never asked me—the story of my first love. Why I tell it to you to-night you will soon know. I was left, on the death of my father, to the poverty which too often befalls girls gently born and reared in England, when their fathers have been professional men whose lives have been a life-long struggle. The usual wretched alternatives in such cases—the governess or useful companion careers—were open to me, and my relatives, who were few and poor, thought they had done a great thing for me, when they got me a situation as companion to an elderly widow lady, who lived comfortably at Brighton. I went to her house. She was a gentlewoman, the sister of an Irish nobleman, and I began the dullest life that ever a young girl with high spirits and perfect health was condemned to. Mrs. Southwood was not in the least unkind, but she was elderly, in delicate health, and a childless widow, who lived in the past, and had no sympathy with the present, or comprehension of the dreariness of my life. I had a comfortable room, plenty to eat and drink, a drive in a close carriage with herself and her pug every day, a moderate amount of occupation in reading books which did not interest me, and in writing her letters, and I had 'early hours'—she made a great point of early hours—what could I want more? I often asked myself the question, for I had a misgiving that I was a rebel against Fate in yielding to the depression and weariness which beset me; but I could not resign myself to the want of interest in my life. Mrs. Southwood visited only one family at Brighton, that of a clergyman, Mr. Toulmin. They were not very lively people, but they were better than nothing; and Clara, the eldest girl, took a fancy to me, chiefly, I believe, because I never tired of her confidences respecting her betrothed lover, a lieutenant in the navy, who was away in some distant part of the world with his ship. One day Clara Toulmin told me that her father was about to take a pupil, a young man, who was going into the Church in order to take up a family living in Ireland. He had been a short time in the navy, and was rather wild, she added, but her father would be sure to bring him all right, and it could not be objectionable in any way, as she (Clara) was 'engaged.' The pupil arrived, and was introduced to Mrs. Southwood, who discovered that he was a distant connection of her own. She liked the young man very much, and she brightened up in his pleasant company. He was very handsome and pleasant, with a careless way about him as if everything were a good joke and nothing mattered much, which is, I suppose, peculiarly captivating to people with whom life is dull, and who have to think very much about small things. I don't suppose she ever thought about me, and of course she was not bound to do so, when she made him free of her house. I have told you enough, John. Mr. Toulmin's pupil fell in love, or fancied he fell in love, with me; I fell in love with him without any fancy at all about it. No one could have wondered at it, or blamed me, who had seen him then. It was all a secret of course, and he was full of the delightful romance of such a secret. He would study hard, he would get the family living, he would marry me, and we should be happy ever after."

Mrs. Pemberton paused, but her husband only said:

"Go on, love."

"I had nobody to confide in, nobody to advise me, and I agreed to it all. I trusted him entirely, and I was perfectly happy then. He did study; he did go on steadily; and nothing occurred to trouble my peace or to interfere with my dreams, until Mrs. Southwood took a fancy for going abroad in the spring, and he and I had to part. Mrs. Southwood was quite sorry to bid him good-bye, and she told him he should have an invitation to the house of her brother—the Irish lord; she called him 'his cousin'—for the vacation. He and I parted with every protestation of affection and fidelity. For some time he wrote to me constantly, and I was content. I need not dwell on this, John; my story is nearly ended. Before Mrs. Southwood returned to England his letters to me were discontinued; the two or three which I wrote, to inquire into the cause of his silence, remained unanswered. I suffered—need I tell you what I suffered? We returned, and went to Brighton. Clara Toulmin and her mother called on the day after our arrival, and they had not been many minutes in the room when Mrs. Toulmin mentioned her husband's pupil, and 'suppposed Mrs. Southwood had heard the news.' She asked what Mrs. Toulmin meant, and was answered that he had gone to Ireland, and was engaged to be married to a nobleman's daughter—to no other, in fact, than Mrs. Southwood's own niece. The young lady's father was understood to object, but the young lady to be determined, and Mr. Toulmin supposed, 'if his pupil could only keep steady enough to be ordained, and not get into any scrapes beforehand,' the marriage would take place. Mrs. Southwood was roused to interest now that the young man's character might have a serious meaning to 'her own people.' She questioned her visitors, and it came out that there had been a good deal to complain of while he was with them. I do not know how I got out of the room, or what I did when I left it, but I remember that I escaped just as Mrs. Toulmin said her father's pupil was staying at Westport, near 'his lady-love's home,' which was in the county of Galway, and that Mrs. Southwood was very cross because I was too ill that evening to read to her, and gave me to understand that delicacy of health, or 'nerves,' or low spirits in a companion were by no means in her bargain. I wrote to him, I told him the story I had heard, and that I did not believe it, but his long silence required, and I demanded, an explanation. He answered my letter, John, and told me the story was true!"

"Scoundrel!"

"No, John; not in that, at least; only weak, vain, and mistaken, like myself. He threw himself, he said, on my mercy and forbearance. If I should decide on revealing what his conduct to me had been, I could be revenged on him indeed, for I should ruin all his hopes. He had ceased to love me; he loved another; he implored my pardon. That was all. I answered his letter in these words—'You are free;' and I wrapped up his letters to me in the paper on which I wrote them. The next day I told Mrs. Southwood that I must leave her. She did not care for any explanations, my vague excuse, 'family circumstances,' was sufficient for her. I went to London, got a respectable lodging, and set to work to procure a situation with some one going abroad. I succeeded as you know, came out to Sydney, and had been living there one year when you and I met, only six months before the day which I asked you to recall. That is my story, John. Not an uncommon one, I daresay, and, seeing how it has ended, and how happy I am, not one to make much of or remember. But now I come to the other points—the reason why I tell it to you to-night; and the bearing of it on my feelings about our going to England."

"Stop a minute, Mary. Did this fellow marry the lord's daughter?"

"I don't know, but I think not. I looked long and anxiously for an announcement of the marriage, but none ever met my eye, and no news of it, or of him, ever reached me. And now, John, let me tell you this, first. When it was decided that we were to return to England, after these happy, happy years, in which I had outlived all trace of grief, and found all my life and love in you and our home, it came back to me in a strange way, which made me uneasy. I could not banish the idea that I should hear of him, or see him, and I was angry with myself; I was jealous for the entire and perfect absorption of my past and present life into yours, that there could be pain or embarrassment in the probability, or even the certainty. I don't, I can't explain it well, John, but I had almost a superstitious dread that Fate was going to intervene against me—that there was a menace to our peace in this resolution of yours—something more to be dreaded and grieved for, than the parting with the dear home, where we had been so happy for so long."

"Feeling this so strongly, dear, why did you not tell it to me sooner; and why did you so positively deny that you disliked our going to England, only yesterday?"

"Because it was wrong, and foolish, and faithless; because only yesterday I took myself strongly to task for it, and determined to put it away from me, knowing it was right that we should go, and that your child should have the future of her life as you wished it to be. I had conquered it, I had put it away, and my heart was free from all its sinking, my mind was free from every cloud, when you came across the lawn to me in the evening, and told me they were carrying Mr. Randall into the house."

"And has anything arisen, since, to trouble you on this point, dear?"

"John," she said, almost in a whisper, and bending her face until it touched his hair, "Edward Randall is the man!"

SOME BAD OLD INDIAN CUSTOMS.

Some years have gone by, since there was thought to be a good deal in Lord Macaulay's sneer that the English, if they were suddenly turned out of India, would leave behind them few traces of their empire except pyramids of emptied beer-bottles, and the influence of European rule in the East is rated in these days at a juster value. But, even now, there is hardly a clear understanding of how much we have really done to improve the condition of the natives of our great dependency, not only by the importation of Christian manners and customs, and by covering the country with railways, telegraphs, and beneficial public works, but in the less brilliant, but even more useful, direction of sternly and successfully stamping out the cruel and bloody traditions and habits of the past.

It may, therefore, at the present time, be interesting to glance at a few of the horrible practices which we found in India, and the improving of which off the face of the earth gives us some right to say that our Eastern rule has not been altogether powerless for good. Of these, perhaps the most deeply rooted, and the most troublesome to destroy, were the burning of widows; female infanticide; the practice of human sacrifice; and, worst perhaps of all, Thuggee.

Sati—the Suttee of our youthful days, and an ancient "custom of the country"—has so completely passed away from among the characteristic institutions of India, that the Prince of Wales will hardly meet with a single European who has ever witnessed the performance of that hideous rite. Though an immemorial usage, Sati is nowhere enjoined in the sacred books of the Hindoos, and cannot claim a divine sanction even from the Brahminical point of view. According to the Canarese, it derived its origin from the unpleasant tendency of their married women to free themselves from disagreeable husbands, by administering poison to them in their food. In self-defence, therefore, it was decreed by the male law-makers, that widows should suffer themselves to be burned alive with the bodies of their deceased husbands, the only alternative being a life of shame, misery, and destitution. Reconciling themselves to the inevitable, women soon came to regard it as an honour, as well as a duty, to mingle their ashes with those of the loved one, and it is recorded that fifteen concubines of one of the chiefs of Kutch sought, and obtained, permission to offer themselves as a sacrifice on his funeral pyre. As a rule, however, it was only the principal wife who enjoyed this fatal privilege, though Dr. Claudius Buchanan mentions a case which occurred only three miles from Calcutta, in the early part of the present century, when three wives followed their departed lord to the region of shadows. The man had been a Koolin Brahman, who had possessed twelve wives—a moderate number for a member of that sanctified fraternity, with whom it was no uncommon thing to have scores of wives scattered over the country. Of these three, "one was a venerable lady having white locks, who had long been known in the neighbourhood. Not being able to walk, she was carried in a palanquin to the place of burning; and was then placed by the funeral pile. The two other ladies were younger: one of them had a very pleasing and interesting countenance. The old lady was placed on one side of the dead husband, and the two other wives laid themselves down on the other side; and then an old Brahman, the eldest son of the deceased, applied his torch to the pile with unaverted face. The pile suddenly blazed, for it was covered with combustibles; and this human sacrifice was completed amidst the din of drums and cymbals, and the shouts of Brahmans." On the same authority we learn that within a circle of thirty miles from Calcutta, no fewer than two hundred and seventy-five widows perished in this frightful manner in the year 1803, while between the 15th of April and the 15th of August of the following year, at least one hundred and fifteen more followed their example.

The Canarese, in the early part of the last century, used to dig a shallow pit, ten feet by six feet, which they filled up with logs of wood, placing erect at one end a ponderous piece of timber, weighing five hundred pounds or thereabout, to which a cord was attached. When all was ready, oil and clarified butter were poured upon the wood, and the corpse, decently shrouded, laid in the middle of the pile. A torch was then applied by the nearest male relative of the deceased, and, as the flames leaped up, the devoted widow took leave of her friends and acquaintances, and, with cheerful countenance, walked once or twice round the blazing heap, scattering flowers and repeating a form of prayer or invocation. Suddenly she would spring on to the burning logs, amidst a tremendous din of discordant music, and the frantic shouts of the bystanders. At the same instant a Brahman pulled the cord, and the erect beam fell heavily upon the living and the dead, cutting off all means and hope of escape. At times, of course, the hapless victim would shrink back at the last moment, appalled by the fierceness of the flames; but it was then all too late for second thoughts. The surrounding Brahmans would thrust her back with long poles, while her agonising shrieks were drowned in the uproar of drums, trumpets, and cymbals, heightened by the multitudinous yells of the spectators. Such instances of natural timidity, were, however, of comparatively rare occurrence, for when there was reason to suspect a premature collapse of resolution, narcotics were previously administered, and the stupefied victim fell upon the pile she had neither courage nor strength to ascend. A case of Sati, in which a certain degree of grim humour was manifested, is mentioned by Captain Hamilton, an intelligent navigator, who traded along the coasts of the Indian peninsula between 1688 and 1723. A young woman, who had exchanged love tokens with a neighbouring swain, was, nevertheless, given in marriage by her parents to another man, who died very shortly afterwards. Electing to be burned with his ashes, the widow cast her eyes around, and espied among the spectators her former lover. Beckoning to him to approach, as though she wished to bid him a last farewell, she suddenly threw her arms tightly round him, and, dragging him on to the pile, held him in her embrace until both were reduced to ashes.

Now and again, though very rarely, it fell to the happy lot of an English magistrate to succeed in rescuing a miserable creature from this dreadful form of death, but only to condemn her to a life of contumely and social degradation. An instance of this kind is related by Mrs.

Fanny Parks, in her Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque. A Hindo corn-chandler, whose little shop stood at the entrance of her compound, having succumbed after a brief illness, his widow announced her intention of being burned with his body. In vain the magistrate interposed, promising protection and a pension for life; in vain, remembering that one who has made this vow may not touch food or water from the hour of her husband's death until his incremation, did he defer the completion of the rite for forty-eight hours. She remained steadfast to her purpose, and at that time Sati had not yet been declared a criminal offence. The pyre was therefore constructed in the usual manner, and the corpse placed upon the top. As an immense crowd had gathered together, guards were stationed to maintain order, and to prevent any undue pressure being put upon the victim. At the appointed time the widow arrived, robed in red attire, and, after bathing in the Ganges, applied the lighted brand. When the fuel was fairly kindled she calmly mounted the pile, and seating herself at one end, rested her husband's head on her lap, repeating the usual formula, "Ram, Ram, Sati." Presently the wind drove the raging flames upon her, and she was seen to move her limbs in agony. On a sudden impulse of pain and terror she sprang to her feet and approached the side, but was driven back by one of the police, who threatened her with his sword, and was instantly ordered off to prison by the magistrate. The poor wretch then leaped to the ground, rushed into the river, and extinguished the fire that had seized upon her dress. Her brothers-in-law, who would have succeeded to her husband's shop and little store of eight hundred rupees at her death, cried aloud—as, indeed, did all the mob—"Cut her down! Knock her on the head with a bamboo! Tie her hands and feet, and throw her in again!" and an ugly rush was made towards the pyre; but the European spectators and the police stood firm and repulsed the onslaught. Then the victim, who had been slightly burned on the legs and arms, having drunk a few mouthfuls of water from the river, declared her readiness to reascend the pile, but was stopped by the magistrate. Laying his hand upon her shoulder, and rendering her impure by his touch, he reminded her that by Hindoo law it was forbidden to any one who had quitted the pyre to mount it a second time, but promised to take her under the protection of the British Government. The inhuman rite was thus frustrated, to the disgust of the Hindoos and to the disappointment of the Mussulmans, who had come to witness the exciting spectacle of a woman being burned to death of her own accord.

General Sleeman was less fortunate in his strenuous attempt to rescue an old woman on the banks of the Nerbudda, whose husband died on Tuesday, the 24th of November, 1829. Scarcely had the breath of life departed, when she signified her intention by exclaiming, "Ram, Ram, Suth!" The English officer, however, refused his sanction, and sent a police-guard to prevent the sacrifice. On the Wednesday the dead body was reduced to ashes, while the widow sat on a rock in the bed of the river, resolutely abstaining from any refreshment save, occasionally, a little pân. For five whole days did the poor old creature remain at her post, unmoved by the entreaties even of her own relatives, who were moved to pity by her age and sufferings. To convince them of her inflexibility, she put on the coarse red turban worn by Satis, and broke her bracelets, an act that rendered her an outcast, and precluded all return to her family. On Saturday morning the English magistrate rode over to the spot, in the hope that, by large promises, aided by her protracted abstinence, he might prevail upon her to abandon her fatal resolution. He found her still seated on the rock, holding a cocoanut in each hand, with a brass plate before her, containing a little undressed rice and a few flowers. She spoke quite collectedly, and said that her soul had been five days with her husband beside the rising sun. Committing her children to the care of the British Government, she continued, "I go to attend my husband, Omed Sing Opuddea, with whose ashes on the funeral pile mine have been already three times mixed. . . . My soul is with Omed Sing Opuddea, and my ashes must here mix with his." Fixing her eyes on the distant horizon, she added: "I see them together, under the bridal canopy." For the first time in her long married life she had pronounced the name of her husband, a thing which no Hindoo wife will ever do. No more convincing proof could be desired of her belief that her own spirit had already passed away to do loving duty to her husband's, and that her only tie to life was "a little earth," which still remained to be mixed with his ashes. To have refused any longer to accede to her wishes could have had no other effect than to condemn her to a lingering death by starvation. The prohibition was accordingly withdrawn—a boon gratefully accepted by the faithful and devoted being, who then bathed in the river, and while the pyre was preparing, called for and ate a little pân. The arrangements being completed, she placidly approached, supported on either side by her eldest son and nephew, and, casting up her eyes to Heaven, sorrowfully murmured, "Why have they kept me five days from thee, my husband?" Having walked round the pile by herself, praying in a low voice, and throwing on to it a few flowers, she quietly stepped into the midst of the flames, and, arranging herself as if reclining on a couch, died without uttering a single cry. This old woman had formed the resolution of undergoing this rite thirteen years before, on seeing the beautiful little temples that had been erected over the ashes of her aunt and two other female relatives, who had died as Satis. Her belief in a former life took the shape of remembering her husband and herself as having been three times united in previous phases of existence, while the recreant widow described by Mrs. Parks averred that she had been six times married to, and burned with, the husband whose remains she abandoned in their seventh union. Not unfrequently a widow was burned, holding in her hands the turban or other article of apparel—accompanied, perhaps, by the horoscope—of her husband, who may have died at a distance from his home, and even many months previously. The records of the Supreme Court of Criminal Judicature refer to several cases of children, only nine years old, having been permitted or forced by their relatives to preserve the honour of the family by their self-sacrifice.

The British Government had for some time striven to discourage and discredit Sati, but timidly shrank from a collision with native prejudices and traditions. It was reserved for Lord William Bentinck to earn the gratitude of Hindoo widows, and the respect of the educated classes in India, by boldly denouncing Sati as wilful murder, and placing it in the category of crimes against the person. In the semi-independent States the barbarous superstition lingered yet a while longer; but it is now universally prohibited; and so long as the British supremacy is maintained, the horrid rite will never again be perpetrated in India.

Though confined to certain provinces, the extent to which the practice of female infanticide has been carried in India is perfectly appalling. In two districts alone, those of Kattiawar and Kutch, the annual slaughter of female infants, until the early part of the present century, could not have been less than three thousand; and it is stated that the custom had been in force for quite a thousand years. If these figures be correct, and they are probably rather under than in excess of the actual facts, no fewer than three millions of female children have been cruelly murdered by a population estimated, at the present day, at considerably less than the number of murders committed by themselves and their forefathers, since this unnatural practice was first introduced. It was not until the year 1805 that any suspicion of this monstrous crime was entertained by the Indian Government, and its discovery seems to have been made in the course of conversation with some native gentlemen, by the Hon. Jonathan Duncan, then Governor of Bombay. That truly benevolent man lost no time in instituting measures for the suppression of the evil, and through the zealous and indefatigable exertions of Colonel Walker and Mr. J. P. Willoughby, not many years elapsed before the chief offenders, the Jadeja Rajpoots, pledged themselves to relinquish the practice.

When resident at Benares in 1789, Mr. Duncan had previously discovered that the Rajkoomar Rajpoots, of Jounpore, were guilty of the murder of their female infants, their alleged motive being the difficulty of finding suitable husbands for their daughters, without incurring a ruinous expense. The chiefs were easily induced to enter into a covenant to desist for ever from this odious crime; but the promise was speedily forgotten, and many years passed over before the British Government seriously applied itself to the extirpation of infanticide in the North-west provinces. Nothing, indeed, was done until 1836, when Mr. Thomason, afterwards lieutenant - governor, while engaged in making the settlement of a small district, was surprised to find that not a single girl existed within its boundaries. No preventive measures were even then introduced, but through moral influence the lives of ninety-two Rajpoot girls were saved in the course of the next two years. The amendment, however, did not last, for in 1855 the proportion of girls in twenty-eight villages, under six years, to boys of the same age, was thirty-seven to three hundred and thirty-nine; while in eleven villages there were none under six, and, in eight, no female children at all!

In 1842, Mr. Unwin, collector of Mynpoorie, while employed in revising the ordinary settlement, with a view to lower the revenue demand, in consequence of the great famine of 1838, observed that not a single Chohan female, young or old, was anywhere to be seen. The Chohans are, perhaps, the most noble and exclusive of all the Rajpoot tribes, and for centuries no female infant had been suffered to live a single hour in the old Rajpoot fort that overlooks the valley of the Eesun river. The birth of a son or grandson to the raja was always announced by the discharge of firearms, while the birth of a daughter was regarded as a source of shame and vexation. Through Mr. Unwin's vigilance, however, a granddaughter, born in 1845, was preserved, and the Government despatched a letter of congratulation and a dress of honour to the raja. The first fruits of this example were shown in the threefold increase of female infants in the district during the next twelve months, the number rising from fifty-seven to one hundred and eighty, and in May, 1851, no fewer than one thousand two hundred and sixty-three girls were registered, six years of age and under, while two hundred and twenty-eight had died of natural causes. Of boys of the same ages, however, there were two thousand one hundred and sixty-one alive, and in 1850 it was ascertained that the proportion of boys to girls in sixty-six Chohan villages was as two thousand seven hundred and seventy to two thousand and four. In the neighbouring districts of Etawah, also, it is found that there were eight thousand two hundred and fifty-three boys of ten years and under to four thousand five hundred and eighty-nine girls. The good work begun by Mr. Unwin was completed by Mr. Raikes, who, in 1851, induced the Rajpoot chiefs of Agra, Etawah, Furruckabad, and Puttiala to meet those of Mynpoorie, when certain resolutions were adopted, which cut away the chief ground for infanticide, by regulating the marriage dower and expenses according to four social grades, from the rajah or thakoor, down to the "decent people," who could give only one rupee with their daughter.

But although it was well known that female infanticide was still the rule in the Punjab, and in many parts of the North-western provinces, it was not until the close of 1855 that the Government was moved to appoint Mr. W. R. Moore a special commissioner for its suppression. Mr. Moore's labours and life were unhappily abruptly terminated by the Sepoy revolt; but from his partial investigation it appeared that in the Benares division alone there were three hundred and eight villages in which the crime prevailed, and sixty-two in which not a single girl was to be found under six years of age. In the Goruckpore district alone there were ten villages with one hundred and seventeen boys to twenty-six girls, twenty-five villages with two hundred and sixty-one boys to fifty-one girls, and thirty villages with three hundred and forty-three boys to fifty-four girls. From that time, however, the crime has been rapidly dying out, though it would be rash to affirm that it never takes place. To a great extent the alleged motives have been removed by the limitation of marriage expenses, the gradual extinction of social prejudices, and, above all, by the danger of detection and punishment. The causes commonly assigned were threefold: the difficulty of paying an adequate dower, a deep-rooted aversion from the appellations of "soosun" and "sala"—father-in-law and brother-in-law—and the convenient belief that it was unlucky to spare the life of a female child. The marriage expenses were certainly a serious consideration. In the first place, if a marriageable Hindoo girl be not betrothed, she is held to be disgraced and her family dishonoured; but a Rajpoot maiden can be married only to a Rajpoot belonging to her own caste, and not in her own sub-division, but, if possible, in a higher one. This promotion can only be gained by a heavy payment of money, and the higher the sub-division the greater is the difficulty of making a superior, or even an equal, match. A great point was, therefore, gained when the Raja of Mynpoorie consented to accept four hundred and fifty pounds as the marriage portion of his bride, whereas his ancestors had demanded from ten thousand to fifteen thousand pounds. Then, it was customary to lavish immense sums of money upon the Brahmans, and upon the bards who recited the genealogical tree, and sang of the deeds that were done by the bridegroom's forefathers in the brave days of old. "The dahirna emptied his coffers," says a Rajpoot poet, "on the marriage of his daughter with Pirthiraj, but he filled them with the praises of mankind." The Rana of Oodipoor, according to Colonel Tod, bestowed upon the chief bard gifts valued at ten thousand pounds, besides large sums squandered upon nautch-dancers, jugglers, minstrels, and mendicants. When it was known that a well-to-do Rajpoot was about to give his daughter in marriage, these idle vagabonds would swarm around his house overnight, travelling a distance of twenty to thirty miles to be present. As the procession swept by they would demand a rupee for every one of themselves, for every follower, every horse, and every dog in their company. If the bride's father demurred, he was pushed about, dust was thrown on him, and the vilest abuse poured on himself and his family. It may be easily supposed that the Rajpoots were by no means displeased when the British Government interfered to repress these disturbances, and readily agreed to reform the whole system pertaining to the marriage portion and expenses. It was less easy to get rid of the second objection to female children, arising from the dislike to be called "father-in-law" or "brother-in-law." In former times it was a common thing for Rajpoot warriors to "carry off, by force of arms or stratagem, the marriageable women of the cognate tribes. This practice gave new life to the old Hindoo superstition of the inferior position of the father-in-law. The son-in-law became, more than ever, the social superior of his father-in-law. If the wife were henceforth a slave, the wife's father need expect but little courtesy or consideration. A Rajpoot of the present day (1851) is subject to his son-in-law, hand and foot; can refuse him nothing; and, without disgrace, cannot accept so much as a meal at his hands." To save himself from such a painful and degrading position, the Rajpoot father adopted the easy expedient of putting his female children to death, as soon as they were born. The actual murderers, however, were the midwives, the attendant relatives, or even the mother. The ordinary method was to place the newborn babe in an earthen pan, and suffocate it. If perchance the little one was spared, it was almost invariably through the sudden interposition of the father; and if death were not inflicted immediately after birth, there was no further danger of violence being offered. A Rajpoot landholder, at Busora, told General Sleeman that he happened to be in his field at the time of his wife's confinement; but, as soon as he heard that she had given birth to a female child, he hastened to his home with all speed, and arrived just in time to save its life. The female relatives had put his babe into an earthen pot, which they had buried beneath the floor of the hut, and had lighted a fire over the spot. Scattering the fire, he dug up the jar and found his child still alive, but with two of its fingers much scorched. He added that both his wife and himself were very fond of the little girl, who was then about two years old.

The chivalrous Rajpoots, the noblest of all Indian races, would, perhaps, have been slightly disgusted, had they been told that the same practice, for very similar reasons, prevailed among the barbarous Khonds, a branch of the despised aborigines. These also object to the trouble and expense incidental to daughters, and prefer to expose them at their birth in the jungles. It is their custom, however, for the bridegroom to give farm-stock to the value of fifty or seventy rupees to the bride's father, the repayment of which he can exact should his wife leave him to live with another man—and, as a rule, every woman changes her husband four or five times. Her father is naturally disconcerted at being suddenly called upon to refund the price he had received for his daughter, and is further annoyed every time she repairs to a new home. The Khonds have, besides, a belief that women are the cause of the chief evils of life, and accordingly keep down the number to a minimum. They also believe that souls "return to animate human forms, in the families in which they have been first born and received." This reception, however, is not completed until after the seventh day, when the name is given. If, therefore, the child die previous to that ceremony, there is no chance of the soul returning, so that there will be one female less in future generations. In some Khond villages of one hundred houses, not a single female child was to be seen twenty years ago.

LETTERS AND LETTER-WRITERS.

WITS AND HUMORISTS.

I NEVER plunge down that dark passage in Fleet-street, that leads deep into the dusky barracks of the lawyers, and finally, as Purgatory leads to Paradise, opens into the broad river-side parade-ground of the old Knights Templars, without meeting (in the spirit) a certain small, humbly-clad, and thoughtful-looking boy.

He is the son, as he always tells me, of Mr. John Lamb, clerk to Mr. Salt, one of the benchers of the Inner Temple, and he is on his way, as his blue gown and canary-coloured stockings might show me, to Christ's Hospital, where he is at present struggling with Phædrus and other learned nightmares of childhood. There is no sorrow in his eyes, and he skips along past the fountain, where he always stops to listen to the music of the dripping water, tossing in the air his little muffin cap, thoughtless and happy as one of the garden sparrows. I notice that the boy stammers slightly, and, as he runs past me, I observe that he is a little flat-footed, which gives him a peculiar walk.

By old bookstalls in the City, too, I sometimes have dreams of a far different person, yet the same. I see him there, turning wistfully over a folio. He is a middling-sized man, now very thin and shrunk; he is dressed in rusty black, and wears old-fashioned black gaiters. His fine head and thoughtful brow look too large for his mannikin body and thin legs. His face is brown, his nose large and somewhat Jewish; but his eyes, as his friend Barry Cornwall expresses it, seem "as if they could pick up pins and needles." A half-melancholy smile comes rather over his brow than his eyes, as he glances for a moment at an odd volume of Ford's plays. That is Mr. Charles Lamb: he is a clerk at the India House, and is on his way back to his cottage at Enfield, with a fine copy of Waller's poems in his coat-tail pocket.

Nor do I forget this lovable man, whose life was tinged so deeply with sorrow, whenever I happen to turn out of mid-Holborn southward and find myself in Little Queen-street. There, at No. 7, Lamb, in 1795—three years after he had entered the India House—lived with his father, a good old retired clerk from the Temple; his mother, who was almost bedridden; and his unfortunate sister Mary. Lamb used to come home early to Little Queen-street, and spend his evenings playing at cribbage with his old father, now on the verge of dotage. His sister, whose brain was painfully active, was nearly worn out with the needlework by which she helped the struggling family, and the day-and-night attendance on the crippled mother. Lamb, just twenty, was in love with a fair maiden of Islington, and wrote old-fashioned sonnets to this girl, several of which Mr. Serjeant Talfourd has preserved. The prettiest of them is the following:

A timid grace sits trembling in her eye,
As loth to meet the rudeness of men's sight;
Yet shedding a delicious lunar light,
That steeps in kind oblivion's ecstacy
The care-crazed mind like some still melody;
Speaking most plain, the thoughts which do possess
Her gentle sprite, peace and meek quietness,
And innocent loves and maiden purity,
A look whereof might heal the cruel smart
Of changed friends; or Fortune's wrongs unkind;
Turned are those lights from me, who fondly yet
Past joys, vain loves, and buried hopes regret.

At this time Coleridge was about to incorporate in a book some of Lamb's poems with his own.

On this April-life of sunshine and sorrow, however, a thunderbolt of misery suddenly fell. On Thursday, 22nd of September, 1796, as the family were preparing for their humble dinner, Mary Lamb, who had been "queer" for several days, suddenly seized a case-knife that lay on the table, and began to chase a little girl, her apprentice in dress-making, round the room. On Mrs. Lamb calling to Mary to forbear, she turned on her mother and stabbed her to the heart. The child's cries soon brought assistance, and Charles himself found his sister standing with the knife, still wet, over his dead mother; the old man was weeping by his dead wife's side, and bleeding at the forehead from the blow of a fork thrown by his maddened daughter.

Lamb loved his sister, and this event struck him to the heart. He wrote a letter to his friend Coleridge, describing the terrible scene, and a tear lies in every word. Coleridge had written him an immediate letter of consolation. Lamb's reply is written to thank him. It commences:—

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,—Your letter was an inestimable treasure to me. My poor, ever-dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgment on our house, is restored to her senses and to a dreadful sense and recollection of what has past, awful to her mind and impressive (as it must be to the end of life), yet tempered with religious resignation and the reasonings of a sound judgment, which, in this early stage, knows how to distinguish between a deed committed in a transient fit of frenzy, and the terrible guilt of a mother's murder. I have seen her, and I found her this morning calm and serene—far, very far, from an indecent, forgetful serenity; and she has a most affectionate and tender concern for what has happened."

Lamb then goes on to describe a scene on the second day after the murder, when a party of twenty sympathising friends were at supper. He had sat down with them, when a sudden pang of grief for his poor dead mother, lying in the next room, impelled him, in indignation and tears, to go and throw himself on his knees beside her coffin and ask "forgiveness of Heaven and of her for forgetting her so soon." "The good lady of the madhouse" and her daughter, "an elegant, sweet-behaved young lady," love Mary, writes Lamb, "and are taken with her amazingly." Then he hints at other troubles; his brother John is prosperous and selfish, offers no help with the old father, and keeps saying, in a comfortable way, "Charles, you must take care of yourself, and must not abridge a single pleasure, and so on." Then there is an old aunt, of whom a wealthy relation gets tired, and who has to be also nursed by Mary, which brings on another fit of insanity. This was the good old aunt who used to come to Christ's Hospital, and rather hurt Lamb's pride by sitting down on the old coal-cellar steps, as you went into the old grammar school, and there open her tied-up apron and bring out a basin with some nice thing she had saved for the dear boy.

There can be no doubt that at this time Lamb made a vow never to marry while his sister lived and required his sheltering care. Once only, in 1800, when an old servant died, and Mary went back to the asylum sooner than usual, his courage and patience for a moment gave way, and he writes to a friend, "My heart is quite sick, and I don't know where to look for relief. My head is very bad; I almost wish that Mary were dead."

Once more only was Lamb in love. While at Pentonville he formed a Platonic attachment with a young Quaker girl, to whom, however, he never spoke. To her memory he wrote those beautiful lines beginning—

> My sprightly neighbour gone before
> To that unknown and silent shore,
> Shall we not meet as heretofore
> Some summer morning?

Lamb's letters display all his likings, prejudices, and peculiarities, his love for old books and old friends, his relish for bookstalls, his delight in old London nooks, and his tendency to pun. Now and then he would plan an elaborate hoax for an old friend and enjoy its result with the utmost gusto. The following letter to H. C. Robinson is a good instance of this practice, and, as one reads it, one imagines the dry smile stealing over the face of this quaint, amiable writer:—

"April 10th, 1829.

"DEAR ROBINSON,—We are afraid you will slip from us and from England without again seeing us. It would be charity to come and see me. I have these three days been laid up with strong rheumatic pains in loins, back, shoulders. I shriek sometimes from the violence of them. I get scarce any sleep, and the consequence is I am restless, and want to change sides as I lie, and I cannot turn without resting on my hands, and so turning all my body all at once, like a log with a lever. While this rainy weather lasts I have no hope of alleviation. I have tried flannels and embrocation in vain. Just at the hip-joint the pangs are sometimes so excruciating that I cry out. It is as violent as the cramp, and far more continuous. I am ashamed to whine about these complaints to you, who can ill enter into them; but indeed they are sharp. You go about, in rain or fine, at all hours, without discommodity. I envy you your immunity at a time of life not much removed from my own. But you owe your exemption to temperance, which it is too late for me to pursue. I, in my lifetime, have had my good things; hence my frame is brittle, yours strong as brass. I never knew any ailment you had. You can go out at night in all weathers, sit up all hours. Well, I don't want to moralise; I only wish to say that, if you are inclined to a game of double-dumby, I would try to bolster up myself in a chair for a rubber or so. My days are tedious, but less so, and less painful, than my nights. May you never know the pain and difficulty I have in writing so much! Mary, who is most kind, joins in the wish! C. LAMB."

Then comes the clearing-up letter a week later:—

"April 17th, 1829.

"I do confess to mischief. It was the subtlest diabolical piece of malice heart of man has contrived. I have no more rheumatism than that poker. Never was freer from all pains and aches. Every joint sound, to the tip of the ear from the extremity of the lesser toe. The report of thy torments was blown circuitously here from Bury. I could not resist the jeer. I conceived you writhing when you should just receive my congratulations. How mad you'd be. Well, it is not in my method to inflict pangs. I leave that to Heaven. But in the existing pangs of a friend I have a share. His disquietude crowns my exemption. I imagine you howling; and I pace across the room shooting out my free arms, legs, &c., *S A I*, this way and that way, with an assurance of not kindling a spark of pain from them. I deny that nature meant us to sympathise with agonies. Those free contortions, retortions, extortions have the merriness of antics. Nature meant them for farce—not so pleasant to the actor, indeed; but Grimaldi cries when we laugh, and it is but one that suffers to make thousands rejoice.

"You say that shampooing is ineffectual. But, per se, it is good to show the introvolutions, extra-volutions, of which the animal frame is capable, to show what the creature is susceptible of, short of dissolution.

"You are worst of nights, ain't you? You never was racked, was you? I should like an authentic map of those feelings.

"You seem to have the flying gout. You can scarcely screw a smile out of your face, can you? I sit at immunity, and sneer ad libitum. 'Tis now the time for you to make good resolutions. I may go on breaking 'em, for anything the worse I find myself. Your doctor seems to keep you on the long cure. Precipitate healings are never good. Don't come while you are so bad. I shan't be able to attend to your throes and the dumby at once. I should like to know how slowly the pain goes off. But don't write, unless the motion will be likely to make your sensibility more exquisite.—Your affectionate and truly healthy friend, C. LAMB.

"Mary thought a letter from me might amuse you in your torment."

How full of fun this letter is, with its pretended triumph over his friend! He seems to taste the humour of every word, as a child lingers over a sweetmeat.

The following letter to Mrs. Hazlitt relates one of the most humorous scenes of Lamb's life. George Dyer, who edited the interminable Delphin Classics, had been to call on the Lambs at their home in Colebrook-row, and in broad noon had left the house, and in a fit of poetic abstraction walked plump into the New River. Now Dyer was an absent man, and had been known to put snuff into the tea-pot in mistake for tea; but walking into the New River in broad daylight was worthy of Sir Isaac Newton:—

"1823.

"DEAR MRS. H.,—Sitting down to write a letter is such a painful operation to Mary that you must accept me as her proxy. You have seen our house. What I now tell you is literally true. Yesterday week George Dyer called upon us at one o'clock (bright noon-day), on his way to dine with Mrs. Barbauld, at Newington, and he sat with Mary about half an hour. The maid saw him go out, from her kitchen window, but, suddenly losing sight of him, ran up in a fright to Mary. G. D., instead of keeping the slip that leads to the gate, had deliberately, staff in hand, in broad open day, marched into the New River. He had not his spectacles on, and you know his absence. Who helped him out they can hardly tell, but between 'em they got him out drenched through and through. A mob collected by that time and accompanied him in. 'Send for the doctor!' they said; and a one-eyed fellow, dirty and drunk, was fetched from a public-house at the end, where, it seems, he lurks, for the sake of picking up water practice, having formerly had a medal from the Humane Society for some rescue. By his advice the patient was put between blankets; and, when I came home to dinner, I found G. D. a-bed, raving, light-headed, with the brandy-and-water which the doctor had administered. He sung, laughed, whimpered, screamed, babbled of guardian angels, would get up and go home; but we kept him there by force; and by next morning he departed, sobered, and seems to have received no injury. All my friends are open-mouthed about having palings before the river; but I cannot see, because an absent man chooses to walk into a river, with his eyes open at mid-day, I am the more likely to be drowned in it coming home at midnight.

"I have had the honour of dining at the Mansion-house on Thursday last, by special card from the Lord Mayor, who never saw my face, nor I his; and all from being a writer in a magazine! The dinner costly, served on massy plate, champagne, pines, &c.; forty-seven present, among whom the chairman and two other directors of the India Company. There's for you! and got away pretty sober! Quite saved my credit.

"We continue to like our home prodigiously. Our kind remembrances to all.—Yours truly, C. LAMB."

The next letter from which we extract contains a wonderful little etching of Hazlitt. He is represented at a morning call, sitting in dark silence, with his hat by the side of his chair, and after a purgatorial ten minutes, abruptly rising, shaking hands, and departing:—

"Mary is just stuck fast in 'All's well that ends well.' She complains of having to set forth so many female characters in boy's clothes. She begins to think Shakespeare must have wanted—Imagination. I, to encourage her, for she often faints in the prosecution of her great work, flatter her with telling her how well such a play and such a play is done. But she is stuck fast. I have been obliged to promise to assist her. To do this, it will be necessary to leave off tobacco. But I had some thoughts of doing that before, for I sometimes think it does not agree with me. Mr. Hazlitt is in town. I took him to see a very pretty girl professedly where there were two young girls—the very head and sum of the girlery were two young girls. They neither laughed, nor sneered, nor giggled, nor whispered—but they were young girls—and he sat and frowned blacker and blacker, indignant that there should be such a thing as youth and beauty, till he tore me away before supper in perfect misery, and owned he could not bear young girls; they drove him mad. So I took him to my old nurse, where he recovered perfect tranquillity. Independent of this, and as I am not a young girl myself, he is a great acquisition to us. He is, rather imprudently I think, printing a political pamphlet on his own account, and will have to pay for the paper, &c. The first duty of an author, I take it, is never to pay anything. But, Non cuivis contigit adire Corinthum. The managers, thank my stars, have settled that question for me.—Yours truly, C. LAMB."

In the next letter in our bouquet, Lamb tells his friend Manning, for whose intellectual qualities he had a great respect, his intention of moving house, and expatiates on the variety, splendour, and glories of London, being one of the first of our writers who saw the true poetry of the old city. With what gusto and humorous affection he catalogues the delights of the modern Babel!

"I am going to change my lodgings, having received a hint that it would be agreeable, at Our Lady's next feast. I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms, which look out (when you stand a tip-toe) over the Thames and Surrey-hills; at the upper end of King's Bench-walk, in the Temple. There I shall have all the privacy of a house without the encumbrance, and shall be able to lock my friends out as often as I desire to hold free converse with my immortal mind; for my present lodgings resemble a minister's levee, I have so increased my acquaintance (as they call 'em) since I have resided in town. Like the country mouse that had tasted a little of urban manners, I long to be nibbling my own cheese by my dear self, without mouse-traps and time-traps. By my new plan I shall be as airy, up four pair of stairs, as in the country; and in a garden, in the midst of enchanting (more than Mahommedan Paradise) London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest-bowing tradesman, I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter, and the parson into the bargain. O her lamps of a night! her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardware-men, pastry-cooks, St. Paul's-churchyard, the Strand, Exeter-change, Charing-cross, with the man upon a black horse! These are thy gods, O London! Ain't you mightily moped on the banks of the Cam? Had you not better come and set up here? You can't think what a difference. All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. At least, I know an alchemy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds.

"'Tis half-past twelve o'clock, and all sober people ought to be a-bed. Between you and me, the L. ballads are but drowsy performances. C. LAMB (as you may guess)."

Here is a letter written to Manning in high spirits. It contains another touch of the character of that confused old Dominie Sampson, George Dyer. He had been calling on Lamb with an old doctor who tied his knee-breeches with pack-thread, and boasted that he had received mortifications from prime ministers:—

"The doctor wanted to see me; for I being a poet, he thought I might furnish him with a copy of verses to suit his Agricultural Magazine. The doctor, in the course of the conversation, mentioned a poem called the 'Epigoniad,' by one Wilkie, an epic poem, in which there is not one tolerable good line all through, but every incident and speech borrowed from Homer. George had been sitting inattentive, seemingly, to what was going on—hatching of negative quantities—when, suddenly, the name of his old friend Homer stung his pericranicks, and, jumping up, he begged to know where he could meet with Wilkie's works. It was a curious fact, he said, that there should be such an epic poem and he not know of it, and he must get a copy of it, as he was going to touch pretty deeply upon the subject of the Epic, and he was sure there must be some good things in a poem of eight thousand lines."

The letter to Manning, which follows, expresses, with all Lamb's quaint and playful humour, the troubles and vexations of moving house. One can fancy the lumber and litter of Lamb's chambers, with the old pipes, old prints, and old books. Lamb was an old bachelor, living with an invalid sister, and had always lived a careless, cozy sort of life. A great part of Lamb's pleasant mannerism, from childhood, was associated with the Temple:—

". . . . Don't come any more to Mitre-court-buildings. We are at 34, Southampton-buildings, Chancery-lane, and shall be here till about the end of May; then we remove to 4, Inner Temple-lane, where I mean to live and die, for I have such a horror of moving that I would not take a benefice from the king, if I was not indulged with non-residence. What a dislocation of comfort is comprised in that word 'moving!' Such a heap of little nasty things, after you think all is got into the cart: old dredging-boxes, worn-out brushes, gallipots, vials—things that it is impossible the most necessitous person can ever want, but which the women, who preside on these occasions, will not leave behind, if it was to save your soul! They'd keep the cart ten minutes to stow in dirty pipes and broken matches, to show their economy. Then you can find nothing you want for many days after you get into your new lodgings. You must comb your hair with your fingers, wash your hands without soap, go about in dirty gaiters. Were I Diogenes, I would not move out of a kilderkin into a hogshead, though the first had had nothing but small beer in it and the second reeked claret. Our place of final destination—I don't mean the grave, but No. 4, Inner Temple-lane—looks out upon a gloomy, churchyard-like court, called Hare-court, with three trees and a pump in it. Do you know it? I was born near it, and used to drink at that pump when I was a Rechabite of six years old."

And now we turn to another great humorist, whose laughter was also blended with tears. Tom Hood, like Lamb, laughed that he might not weep. Though he had not a great domineering sorrow brooding ever at his heart, like Lamb, he was a man whose life was one long illness, and, when he was not staving off Death, he was struggling with poverty. No English writer was, perhaps, more essentially a humorist, and he could no more help his ceaseless puns than an electric machine can help its sparks. His quick brain as unconsciously delivered itself of these analogies and verbal distortions, as a squib discharges itself of fire. The very sound of a word suggested some fresh, strange shape into which it could be twisted, and which had been latent within it; and by the side of this sparkling yet almost mechanical fun lay the power of touching the heart and calling forth tears; for in that weak, drudging invalid there was stored a powerful love for humanity, and a pity, almost saint-like, for its sorrows and its temptations. His puns were sweetmeats for everybody's dish; but when he sang The Song of the Shirt, and The Bridge of Sighs, he moved the very soul of England. This delightful poet and punster was the son of a Scotch bookseller in the Poultry, who published the poems of Kirke White and Bloomfield. Tom Hood was, as a boy, apprenticed to an engraver, and there acquired the power of drawing grotesques, that he afterwards employed in his comic annuals. From a child he showed a relish for fun and a power of playful versifying; and at about twenty-one became sub-editor of the London Magazine, for Messrs. Taylor and Hussey. He seems to have been intimate with Charles Lamb soon after his marriage; and in 1826 appeared the first series of the delightful Whims and Oddities, the fun and frolic of the leisure moments of a thoughtful and sensitive man. The following letter to a child exhibits Hood's style of fun very well, and shows us him in one of his most playful moments:—

"Devonshire Lodge, New Finchley-road,
"St. John's-wood,
"July 1st (first of Hebrew falsity).

"MY DEAR DUNNIE,—I have heard of your doings at Sandgate, and that you were so happy at getting to the sea that you were obliged to be flogged a little to moderate it and keep some for next day. I am very fond of the sea, too, though I have been twice nearly drowned by it; once in a storm in a ship, and once under a boat's bottom when I was bathing. Of course you have bathed, but have you learned to swim yet? It is rather easy in salt water, and diving is still easier, even, than at the sink. I only swim in fancy and strike out new ideas!

"Is not the tide curious? Though I cannot say much for its tidiness; it makes such a slop and litter on the beach. It comes and goes as regularly as the boys of a proprietary school, but has no holidays. And what a rattle the waves make with the stones when they are rough; you will find some rolled into decent marbles and bounces; and sometimes you may hear the sound of a heavy sea, at a distance, like a giant snoring. Some people say that every ninth wave is bigger than the rest. I have often counted, but never found it come true, except with tailors, of whom every ninth is a man. But in rough weather there are giant waves bigger than the rest, that come in trios, from which, I suppose, Britannia rules the waves by the rule of three. When I was a boy I loved to play with the sea, in spite of its sometimes getting rather rough. I and my brothers chucked hundreds of stones into it, as you do; but we came away before we could fill it up. In those days we were at war with France. Unluckily it is peace now, or with so many stones you might have good fun for days in pelting the enemy's coast. Once I almost thought I nearly hit Boney! Then there was looking for an island like Robinson Crusoe! Have you ever found one yet, surrounded by water? I remember once staying on the beach, when the tide was flowing, till I was a peninsula, and only by running turned myself into a continent.

"Then there is fishing at the seaside. I used to catch flat-fish with a very long string line. It was like swimming a kite! But perhaps there are no flat-fish at Sandgate except your shoe-soles. The best plan, if you want flat-fish where there are none, is to bring codlings and hammer them into dabs. Once I caught a plaice, and, seeing it all over red spots, I thought I had caught the measles.

"Do you ever long, when you are looking at the sea, for a voyage? If I were off Sandgate with my yacht (only she is not yet built), I would give you a cruise in her. In the meantime you can practice sailing in any little boat you can get. But mind that it does not flounder or get squamped, as some people say instead of 'founder' and 'swamp.' I have been swamped myself by Malaria, and almost floundered, which reminds me that Tom Junior, being very ingenious, has made a cork model of a diving-bell that won't sink.

"By this time, I suppose, you are become, instead of a land-boy, a regular sea-urchin; and so amphibious that you can walk on the land as well as on the water—or better. And don't you mean, when you grow up, to go to sea? Should you not like to be a little midshipman? or half a quartermaster, with a cocked hat and a dirk, that will be a sword by the time you are a man? If you do resolve to be a post-captain, let me know; and I will endeavour, through my interest with the Commissioners of Pavements, to get you a post to jump over of the proper height. Tom is just rigging a boat, so I suppose that he inclines to be an Admiral of the Marines. But before you decide, remember the port-holes, and that there are great guns in those battle-doors that will blow you into shuttlecocks, which is a worse game than whoop and hide—as to a good hiding!

"And so farewell, young 'Old Fellow,' and take care of yourself so near the sea, for in some places, they say, it has not even a bottom to go to if you fall in. And remember when you are bathing, if you meet with a shark, the best way is to bite off his legs, if you can, before he walks off with you. And so, hoping that you will be better soon, for somebody told me you had the shingles, I am, my dear Dunnie, your affectionate friend, THOMAS HOOD.

"P.S. I have heard that at Sandgate there used to be lobsters; but some ignorant fairy turned them all by her spell into bolsters."

AN EPISODE OF THE ITALIAN REVOLUTION.

IN 1861 all Italy, from the Alps to Sicily, was agitated by violent reactionary movements in favour of Francis the Second. Secret agencies had long been at work scattering the seeds of discord far and wide; but it was not till the revolution had fairly commenced that the widespread character of the disaffection became evident. In no quarter, however, was the pernicious influence of the rebellion more clearly seen, or afterwards more severely felt, than among the brigands.

The brigands had hitherto existed only in scattered bands, whose numbers rarely, if ever, exceeded some thirty or forty men, and these, too, never ventured far into the plains, but confined their operations within very narrow limits. But in 1861 all this was changed, for brigandage then assumed a truly gigantic aspect.

The adherents of the dethroned king saw in brigandage a means of obtaining the restoration of their hero, and many, accordingly, cast in their lot with the outlaws; while others were impelled by the hopes of gain, or by the expectation of ultimate power in the new state. The greatest reinforcements were, however, obtained from the prisons, which, from the lax guard maintained over them, afforded to enterprising criminals an easy means of escape. But, whatever the ultimate end each of these several classes proposed to itself might be, the primary motive was plunder, and this they were not slow in testifying. Sallying forth unexpectedly from the secluded depths of the pine-forests of the Apennines, they swept down like a torrent over the peaceful plains beneath, carrying destruction and ruin in their train. Gradually they extended their field of operations, and, encouraged by their rapidly increasing numbers, did not hesitate to attack the hamlets, and even to meditate an assault on some of the towns. Such was the state of matters at the period of which we write.

Of all the provinces of Italy, Basilicata had ever been, more than any other, a home for the brigand. From its mountain fastnesses and forest depths he could carry fierce and sudden destruction into the plain beneath; and in these refuges, too, he could, when hard beset, bid defiance to pursuit. But though, as we have already said, it had always been more or less infested by brigands, it now appeared to have suddenly become a general rendezvous for them. They established themselves in positions of great strength on the heights of Melfi, from which they levied blackmail on the surrounding district.

The leader of this concentrated band of ruffians was the notorious Carmine Donatelli, better known by his surname of Crocco. He was an escaped convict, a villain of the deepest dye, and one who would not scruple to do anything if it but served his purpose for the time.

To his daring mind the operations as hitherto conducted were far too tame and profitless, and nothing would satisfy his ardent longings save an attack on one of the towns of the province.

The first of these on which his eye fell was Venosa, a town of no great importance either in size or commerce, but which possesses a historical interest from its having been the birthplace of the Roman poet Horace. The inhabitants, warned of their danger, set about making preparations for the defence of the town. The National Guards, who were posted in the neighbouring hamlets, were recalled, and every available means of defence was put in requisition. Barricades were erected in the streets leading to the gates of the town, and the outer wall was strengthened as far as could possibly be done in such a short space of time.

For some days it seemed as if the report of the intended attack by the brigands had been but an idle rumour, for there was no appearance of them, nor any news of their approach; and the inhabitants were beginning to be lulled into a state of fancied security. From this they were destined, however, to be speedily and terribly aroused.

On the morning of the 10th of April, a party of the National Guard had proceeded some little distance from the town for the purpose of reconnoitring, when they were met by a crowd of peasants, laden with their household gear, and hurrying with all possible speed towards Venosa. On being interrogated by the troops, they informed them that they were betaking themselves to the shelter of the town, as the brigands, laying the country waste in their progress, were rapidly approaching Venosa. Their tale was soon more than confirmed by other parties bound on the same errand; and the Guards, considering it would be more prudent to retire than risk the chances of a conflict with superior numbers, made the best of their way back to the town, and prepared to make their position as secure as possible.

The dreaded foe at length appeared—a motley crew about five hundred in number. Had it been possible to eliminate from one's mind the thought of the brutal cruelties these brigands practised, one might have looked with admiration on the picturesque spectacle, as they debouched from the shelter of the wood that fringed the road to Venosa, and deployed along its margin to the position their leader had chosen as his basis of operations.

In such a crowd, so numerous and composed of such heterogeneous elements, it might have appeared almost absurd to look for discipline; but perfect discipline there was, for, whatever his other qualities might be, Crocco most undoubtedly was "a ruler of men." His word in that band was law, and the punishment of disaffection was death.

Firm to the trust reposed in them, the National Guards planted themselves at every possible approach, and determined to hold their own against all odds.

Burning for the onset, the brigands urged Crocco to lead them on to the assault, a demand to which their leader readily acceded. With a wild shout they darted on towards the barriers, expecting to carry them at the first onset; but they had in this reckoned without their host, for on coming within range, they were met by a sharp volley from the rifles of the National Guard, which threw their ranks into disorder, and compelled them for the moment to retire.

Crocco seeing that his men were likely to suffer very severely by a headlong assault upon the town, was hesitating whether he should abandon his attempt or wait the issue of events, when one of his scouts brought intelligence to him that a white flag, evidently a signal from friends inside the town, was being displayed from an embrasure on the east side. Reassured by this, Crocco, detaching a strong party of the brigands from the main body, made a detour through the woods and approached the place where the signal was being displayed. So far from resistance being offered, ladders were lowered down to them from the walls, so that their entrance was greatly facilitated.

Once inside the town, their task was a comparatively easy one. Surprised and betrayed, the National Guard were almost entirely at the mercy of the brigands. Even yet, notwithstanding overwhelming odds, they might have retrieved the fortune of the day, but the citizens, fearing lest a vigorous resistance might exasperate the brigands, and, in the event of failure on their part, might cause them to lay the town in ruins, interposed, and, with tears in their eyes, besought the soldiers to desist, and leave them to their fate. Thus cast aside, as it were, the National Guard had no resource left but to retire to the castle, and there endeavour to defend themselves against the fate which the townspeople seemed so ready to embrace.

Crocco then admitted the rest of his band into the town without opposition, and immediately gave orders to his men to plunder. No second command was needed, and the ruffian band swept down on the defenceless town like a whirlwind.

It would only harrow the reader's mind were the dreadful scenes that ensued depicted in all their horrors; but we shall present one scene whose dread details are, notwithstanding the lapse of years, as vividly impressed on the writer's mind as if they had been occurrences of yesterday. For obvious reasons the names of the dramatis personæ must be fictitious.

In one of the largest squares in the town stood the house of the canon La Casca. He had rendered himself particularly obnoxious to the party of Francis the Second by the strenuous support he had all along given to the cause of Victor Emmanuel, and because he had endeavoured by rigorous measures to quell the reactionary outbreaks within his district. Towards his house, therefore, the brigands made their way, actuated alike by the hopes of plunder and the still more powerful thirst for revenge, for Crocco's band had suffered more than any other from the stringent measures of the canon.

Besides his servants, there were with him at this time in the house his only son, Giacomo, a young man of twenty-five; his daughter Marguerite; and her intended husband, Giuseppe Spina, a young man in the full vigour of health and strength.

On the entrance of the brigands into the town, the canon, foreseeing the probable issue of events, resolved on defending himself to the last, and accordingly took full advantage of the short time that elapsed before the arrival of the brigands in the square. All the windows were barricaded and the doors securely fastened; and to protect the inmates still further, and intercept as much as possible the flight of any stray bullet that might find its way in, all the available movables that could be collected were piled behind the windows.

They had not completed their preparations, however, when fierce shouts and imprecations, and a shower of bullets against the gate, gave warning to the inmates of the arrival of the foe. To the demand of the brigands that they should surrender, the canon and his comrades replied by a volley from the loopholes on either side of the doorway; and, surrounded as the doorway was by a dense crowd, each shot sped on its deadly errand with fatal effect. Undeterred, however, by the fall of their comrades, the brigands renewed their aggressive movements, and, having obtained a large plank from a neighbouring erection, advanced once more to the doorway, and began to batter it in an endeavour to effect an entrance. Shot after shot sped amongst them and thinned their ranks, but, though the flagstones were heaped with dead and slippery with blood, the ruffians pursued their work with unabated vigour.

At length, under the unceasing shower of blows, the door gave way, carrying with it in its fall the side-posts and the adhering masonry. Amid the crash and dust of the falling timbers, the brigands clambered over their dead comrades, and with demoniac shouts rushed into the devoted dwelling.

Fierce and desperate was the contest that ensued. In the entrance a dreadful hand-to-hand conflict took place, and the combatants were now too closely intermingled to admit of a shot being fired without endangering friends as well as foes. The struggle was fierce and long; but what could strength and skill avail against such overwhelming odds? With diminished numbers, but with unabated courage, the heroic canon and his brave followers were compelled to retreat before their foes, each step being gallantly disputed. From room to room were they driven, until, after retreating up the staircase, they gained a front room overlooking the street, where they had determined to make a last stand.

As the party crossed the threshold, the gallant canon received a shot full in the forehead, and, without a groan, sank lifeless to the ground. Over his prostrate form the assailants pressed into the room, where stood at bay the three survivors of the conflict—the canon's son, Marguerite, and Giuseppe Spina.

The first of these was faint and weak from loss of blood, which was gushing from a gaping wound in his right wrist. Giuseppe, on the other hand, though he had received several wounds, was as yet comparatively fresh, and still plied his deadly weapon with as fatal effect as ever.

In two at least of the three that stood there, the prospect of their inevitable doom did not create a single pang. As they gazed round that circle of inhuman foes, on whose countenances not a tinge of pity could be discerned, their souls scorned the idea of a submission to which even death itself appeared preferable.

For a moment there was a dead silence, broken at last by one of the brigands, who fired his pistol, and then rushed with a fierce shout upon the party with his sword. This was the signal for a general mêlée. The brigands rushed in a body on the gallant party, and, though Giuseppe cleared a circle around them by the force of his dreaded arm, and thus kept the foe at bay, yet, when they retired from the first fierce onslaught, poor Giacomo lay weltering in his blood.

And now came the last deadly struggle. Alone, but undaunted, and undismayed by overwhelming odds, the heroic Spina fought like a lion for the woman he loved. And though Marguerite's cheek blanched, and her pale lip quivered when first her parent and then her brother fell victims to the fury of the brigands, yet she did not otherwise betray her emotion; and when one of the brigands, thinking in the heat of the contest to take Spina unawares and stab him from the rear, was watching for an opportunity to accomplish his design, Marguerite, snatching a pistol from the body of the prostrate Giacomo, shot the villain through the heart.

So struck were the brigands with their undaunted courage, that some of them offered to spare their lives if they would surrender. For the sake of his betrothed, Spina would have condescended, even then, to parley with them; but all hope of a peaceful termination to the struggle was suddenly destroyed, for, at this juncture, there was a commotion, the crowd parted, and to the front pressed the burly form of Vincenzo Nardi, the lieutenant of Crocco. He was a man of admirable build and splendid proportions, but his sinister features destroyed all prepossession that might have been created by his magnificent figure. No sooner had Giuseppe's eyes fallen on Nardi than he recognised in him the murderer of his father, whose life he had taken away at Civita Vecchia the previous year, on account of some fancied wrong.

Not a thought of peace lingered in his mind, but with unbridled fury he rushed on Nardi. Both were brilliant swordsmen, but, taken off his guard by the suddenness of the onset, Nardi received a severe flesh wound in the sword arm. With less of vigour but more of rage he fought on. For a short time nothing was seen but the quick flashes of the steel, as the combatants cut, thrust, and parried. Not a sound broke from either as with compressed lips and flashing eyes they exerted themselves in the stern struggle for life.

The other brigands, as if by mutual consent, stood aloof, and breathlessly watched the issue. Both combatants fought for some time without gaining any apparent advantage, till Spina, making a feint at Nardi's right arm, suddenly changed the direction of the stroke and ran him through the left shoulder. The giant staggered, and it seemed to all as if the blow were fatal, but, with a prodigious effort he recovered himself, and though the blood welled from the wound and dyed his shirt of a ruddier crimson, he still struggled against his fate. But Spina knew that the struggle could not now last long. Pressing on Nardi and showering his blows with redoubled vigour, he strove to give his opponent the coup de grâce. And now it seemed as if Nardi's fate was sealed, for he was weak from loss of blood, and his opponent's strength seemed to be increasing rather than diminishing by the continuance of the conflict; but at this juncture the latter slipped on the bloody flooring, and ere he could recover his footing, the dagger of Nardi was in his heart.

With a wild shriek Marguerite fell on the bosom of her slain lover. With passionate prayers she strove to conjure up one look of recognition in those impassive features; and when she found that her attempts were vain, and that he was really dead, she rent the air with her cries.

With a brutal imprecation, Vincenzo Nardi tore the shrieking maiden from her lover's bosom, and, with the dagger which was yet reeking with his life-blood, inflicted several hideous gashes on her lovely features. The lady swooned and fell apparently lifeless to the floor, the brutal Nardi exclaiming "You have wounded many a one; it is your turn to be wounded now!"

The other brigands, inured as they were to every species of crime, and hardened as they were by a long course of villainy, could not suppress a murmur of horror at the brutal deed, but Nardi, coolly wiping the gory dagger on his buskins, ordered the band to leave the dwelling and its inmates to their fate.

Despite her dreadful wounds, Marguerite survived, and entered a convent in Naples, where she probably seeks, by the aid of religious meditation, to drown the dreadful current of thoughts that must flood her brain at times. Nardi died of his wounds at Venosa that same evening.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER L.

STIFF, tired, and cold, Algernon alighted the next morning at the coach-office in London, after his night journey. He drove to a fashionable hotel not very far from Lord Seely's house, and refreshed himself with a warm bath and a luxurious breakfast. By the time that was done it was eleven o'clock in the forenoon. He had been considering how best to proceed, in a leisurely way, during his breakfast, and had decided to go to Lord Seely's house without further delay. He knew Lady Seely's habits well enough to feel tolerably sure that she would not be out of her bed before eleven o'clock, nor out of her room before mid-day. He thought that he might gain access to his lordship by a coup de main, if he so timed his visit as to avoid encountering my lady. So he had himself driven to within a few yards of the house, and walked up to the well-known door. It was a different arrival from his first appearance on that threshold. Algernon did not fail to think of the contrast, and he told himself that he had been very badly used by the whole Seely family: they had done so infinitely less for him than he had expected! The sense of injury awakened by this reflection was as supporting to him as a cordial.

The servant who opened the door, and who at once recognised Algernon, stared in surprise on seeing him, but was too well trained to express emotion in any other way. After a few inquiries about Lord Seely's health, Algernon asked if he could be allowed to see his lordship. This, however, was a difficult matter. My lord was better, certainly, the footman said, but my lady had given strict orders that he was not to be disturbed. No one was admitted to his room except the doctor, who would not make his visit until late in the afternoon.

"Oh, I shouldn't think of disturbing my lady at this hour," said Algernon, "but I must speak with Lord Seely. It is of the very greatest importance."

"I'll call Mr. Briggs, sir," the footman was beginning, when Algernon stopped him. Mr. Briggs was Lord Seely's own man, and, like all the servants in the house, was certain to obey his mistress's orders rather than his master's, if the two should happen to conflict. Algernon slipped some money into the footman's hand, together with a note which he had written that morning. "There, James," said he; "if you will manage to convey that into his lordship's own hand, I know he will see me. And, moreover, he would be seriously annoyed, if I were sent away without having spoken to him on business of very great importance."

James reflected that the worst that could happen to him would be a scolding from my lady. That was certainly no trifling evil; but he decided to risk it, being moved to do so not only by the bribe, but by a real liking for young Errington, who was generally a favourite with other people's servants.

The note which James carried upstairs was as follows:—

"MY LORD,—I write in the driest and most matter-of-fact terms I can find, to ask for an interview with your lordship with the least possible delay, being unwilling to make, or to appear to make, any claim on the regard you once professed for me, or on the connection which unites us, and desiring you to understand that I appeal to you on behalf of another person; and that, were it not for that other person, I should ask no more favours of your lordship—nor, perhaps, need any. A. ANCRAM ERRINGTON."

In a few moments James came running downstairs and begged Algernon, almost in a whisper, to walk up to his lordship's room.

Lord Seely was not in bed. He was reclining in an easy-chair, with one foot and leg supported on cushions. He seemed ill and worn, but his dark eyes sparkled as he looked eagerly at Algernon, who entered quietly and closed the door behind him. "What is it? I'm afraid you have bad news, Ancram," said Lord Seely, holding out his hand.

Algernon did not take it. He bowed very gravely, and stood opposite to the little nobleman.

"Castalia——!" cried Lord Seely, much dismayed by the young man's manner. "Don't keep me in suspense, for God's sake! Is she ill? Is she dead?"

"No, my lord. Castalia is not dead. Neither, so far as I know, is she ill—in body."

"What is the matter?"

"I must crave a patient hearing, my lord. I regret to have to trouble you whilst you are ill and suffering, but what I have to say must be said without delay. May I ask if there is any one within hearing?"

"No! No one. You can close the door of that dressing-closet if you choose. But there is no one there."

Algernon adopted the suggestion at once, and then sat down opposite to Lord Seely's chair. His whole manner of proceeding was so unusual and unexpected, that it produced a very painful impression on Lord Seely. Algernon rather enjoyed this. He began to speak with only one distinct purpose in his mind: namely, to frighten his wife's uncle into making a strong effort to help him out of Whitford. How much pressure would be necessary to achieve that purpose he could not yet tell. And he began to speak with a sort of reckless abandonment of himself to the guidance of the moment, a mood of mind which had become very frequent with him of late.

"Did your lordship receive a letter from Castalia begging you to obtain a post abroad for me?"

"Certainly. My wife answered it. I—I was unable to write myself. But I intended to reply more at length so soon as I should be better."

"Castalia showed me Lady Seely's reply. That was the first intimation I had of Castalia's having made such an application. I mention this because I know your lordship suspected me of being the prime mover in all her applications to you for assistance."

Lord Seely coloured a little as he replied, "It was natural to suppose that you influenced your wife, Ancram."

"Your lordship must not judge all cases by your own," returned the young man, with a candid raising of his brows; and the colour on Lord Seely's face deepened to a dark red flush, which faded, leaving him paler than before. "As I said," continued Algernon, "I did not know what it was that Castalia had asked you to do for us. But, now that I do know it, I may say at once that I heartily concur with her as to its desirability."

"I cannot agree with you there; but, even if it were so, I assure you it is out of my power——"

"Allow me, my lord! I must tax your patience to listen to what I have to say before you give me any positive answer."

Lord Seely leaned back in his chair, and motioned with his head for Algernon to proceed. The latter went on:

"Exile from England and from all the hopes and ambitions not very unnatural at my age, is not such an alluring prospect that I should be suspected of having incited Castalia to write as she has done. However, I will say no more as to my own private and personal feelings in the matter. I did not mean to allude to them. I beg your pardon." Algernon sat leaning a little forward in his chair. His hands were clasped loosely together, and rested on his knees. He kept his eyes gloomily fixed on the carpet for the most part, and only raised them occasionally to look up at Lord Seely, without raising his head at the same time. "I could not write what I had to say to you, my lord. I dared not write it. Perhaps, even, if I had written, the letter might not have reached you at once; and I could not wish its falling into other hands, so I came away from Whitford last night quite suddenly. I have no leave of absence; the clerk at the post-office, even, did not know I was coming away."

"Do you mean to say, Ancram, that you have deliberately risked the loss of your situation?"

"My 'situation' was as good as lost already. Do you know what happened yesterday, Lord Seely? I was subjected to the agreeable ordeal of a visit from the surveyor of the postal district in which Whitford is situated. I was catechised magisterially. The whole office—including my private room—was subjected to a sort of scrutiny. There have been a great many letters missing at Whitford lately: some money-letters. That is to say, letters which should have passed through our office have never reached their destination. Nothing has been traced. Nothing is known with certainty. But the concurrence of various circumstances points to Whitford as the place where the letters have been—stolen. I am told on all hands that such things never happened in Mr. Cooper's time—Mr. Cooper was my predecessor as postmaster. I am scowled at, and almost openly insulted in the streets, by a miller, or a baker, or something of the kind, who lives in the neighbourhood. He declares he has lost a considerable sum of money by the post, and plainly considers me responsible. You may guess how pleasant my 'situation' has become in consequence of these things being known and talked about."

"But, good Heavens, Ancram——! I don't comprehend your way of looking at the matter. These irregularities are doubtless very distressing, but surely your rational course would be to use every effort to discover the cause of them and set matters right; not run away, as if you were a culprit!"

"Your lordship judges without knowing all the facts."

"Pardon me, Ancram, but no facts can justify such rash behaviour. I have some experience of men and of the world, and I give you my deliberate opinion that you have acted very indiscreetly, to say the least. I am disappointed in you, Ancram. I regret to say it, but I am disappointed in you. You have shown a want of steadiness, and—and—almost of common sense! The more I think of it, the more I disapprove of the step you have taken. It shows a great want of consideration for others; for your wife. If you were alone it might be pardonable—although excessively ill-judged—to throw up your post at the first experience of the rough side of things. We all have difficulties to contend with. The most exalted position is not secure from them, as, indeed, it would appear almost superfluous to point out! The record of my own—my own—official life might supply you with more than one example of the value of steadfast energy, and an inflexible determination to conquer antagonistic circumstances."

Poor Lord Seely! He had been subdued by sickness more completely under the dominion of his wife than could ever be the case when he was able to move about, to get away from her, and to converse with persons who were not entirely devoid of any semblance of respect for his opinion. Lady Seely, it might be said, respected nobody—a point of resemblance between herself and her young kinsman which had not led to any very great sympathy or harmony between them; for, as it is your professed joker who can least bear to be laughed at, so those persons who most flippantly ignore any sentiment of reverence towards others are by no means prepared to tolerate a want of deference towards themselves. Certainly, my lady had snubbed her husband during his illness almost unmercifully; she wished him to get better, and she took care that the doctor's orders were faithfully carried out. But her course of treatment was anything but soothing to the spirit, and my lord's pet vanities received no consideration whatever from her. His mind being now relieved from the first shock of apprehension which Algernon's sudden visit had occasioned (for, though things were bad, it was a relief to him to find that Castalia was safe and well), he could not resist the temptation to lecture a little, and be pompous, and display his suppressed self-esteem with a little more emphasis than usual.

Poor Lord Seely! By so doing he unconsciously drew down a terrible catastrophe. It seemed a trivial cause to determine Algernon to speak as he next spoke—as trivial as the heedless footfall or too-loudly spoken word which brings the avalanche toppling down from the rock.

"The selfishness and egotism of the man are incredible!" thought Algernon, looking at Lord Seely. "Not one word of sympathy with me! Not a syllable to show that my feelings are worthy of any consideration whatever. Pompous little ass!" Then he said, very gravely and quietly, "I think, my lord, that you have forgotten what I said to you in the hurried note I sent upstairs, about appealing to you on behalf of another person."

Lord Seely had forgotten it.

"Ha!—no, Ancram. I—I remember what you said; but, I—I take leave to think that if you wish to consider that other person—it is your wife of whom you spoke, I presume?"

Algernon bowed his head.

"If you wish to consider that person effectually, you ought not to have flown off at a tangent in the manner you have done. You might—ahem!—you might, at least, have written to me for advice."

"Lord Seely, I am sorry to say that you are under an entire misapprehension as to the state of the case."

Lord Seely was not accustomed to be told that he was under an entire misapprehension on any subject.

"If so, Ancram," he answered, with some hauteur, "the fault must be yours. I believe I should succeed in comprehending any moderately clear and accurate statement."

"I will try to speak plainly. During the last six weeks I have been made seriously unhappy by rumours floating about in Whitford respecting my wife."

"Rumours—! Respecting your wife?"

"They reach my ears through various channels, and appear to be rife in every social circle in the place."

"Rumours! Of what nature?"

There was a little pause; then Algernon said, "The least terrible of them is, that Castalia's reason is affected, and that she is not responsible for her actions."

Lord Seely started into a more upright posture, and then sank back again with a suppressed cry of pain. Algernon went on, without looking up: "Her manner has been very singular of late. She has taken to wandering about alone, and to make her wanderings as secretly as may be; she haunts the post-office in my absence, carefully informing herself beforehand whether I am in my private room or not; and if I am reported absent, she enters it, searches the drawers, and, I have the strongest reason to believe—indeed I may say I know—that she has tampered with a little cabinet in which I keep a few private papers, and has taken letters out of it!"

"Ancram!"

"These things, my lord, are commonly reported and spoken of by every gossiping tongue in Whitford. I can't help the people talking. Castalia is not liked there; her manners are unpopular, and even the persons who were inclined to receive her kindly for my sake have been offended and alienated. Still, the things I have told you are facts."

"I am shocked—I am surprised—and, forgive me, Ancram, a little incredulous. You may have listened to malicious tongues; you say that my niece is not liked by the—the class of persons with whom she now associates, and it may be——"

"I am sorry to say, my lord, that Castalia cannot be said to associate with any 'class of persons' in Whitford, for latterly it has become plain to me that all our acquaintances have given her the cold shoulder."

The mingled expression of amazement, incredulity, and offended pride on Lord Selly's face, when Algernon made this announcement, did not operate with the latter as an inducement to spare him. Indeed, he had now gone almost too far to stop short. He held up his hand to deprecate any interruption, and said, "One moment, my lord! I must ask you a question. Have you at any time privately supplied Castalia with money unknown to me?"

"Never! I——"

"Then, Lord Seely, I have only one more circumstance to add. Castalia, the other day, paid a bill of considerable amount to a mercer in Whitford, without my knowledge and without my knowing where she found the money to pay it; and yesterday my clerk, an honest fellow and much attached to me, told me in private and in strict confidence, that it was currently reported in the town that one of the notes paid by my wife to the mercer was endorsed in the same way as a note in one of the missing money-letters I have told you of."

"Good God, Ancram! what do you mean?"

"I told you that the least terrible rumour about Castalia was the rumour that her mind was affected."

Lord Seely's face was almost lead-coloured. He pressed his hands one on each side of his head, with a gesture of hopeless bewilderment. "This is the most appalling thing!" he murmured, and his voice was scarcely audible as he said it.

"I had to make my choice without delay, Lord Seely. I regret to inflict this blow on you in your present suffering state of body; but, if I spared you, I could not have spared Castalia. I chose to spare my wife."

"Yes, yes;—quite—quite right. Spare Castalia! I—I thank you, Ancram—for choosing to spare her rather than me." The poor little nobleman's face was convulsed by a kind of spasm for a second or two, and then he burst into tears, sobbing out, with his face hidden in his trembling hands, "What is to be done? Gracious heavens! what is to be done?"

"I talked about choosing to spare Castalia," said Algernon, looking at her uncle with a sort of furtive curiosity and a feeling that was more akin to contempt than pity, "but I don't know how long it may be in my power, or anyone's power, to spare her. The only chance for either of us is to get away out of Whitford as quickly as possible."

"But—but—— My head is so confused. I am stunned, Ancram—stunned! But—what was I going to say? Oh! have you interrogated Castalia? What representations does she make as to the money? There is so much to be said—to be asked. It cannot be but that there is some error. It cannot be. My poor Castalia!"

"Interrogating Castalia would be quite useless; worse than useless. You don't know what her behaviour and temper have been lately. She is utterly unreasonable. Ask anyone who knows our house in Whitford; ask my servants what my home has been latterly. I have bought the honour of your lordship's alliance somewhat dear."

Lord Seely sank down in his chair as if he had been struck, and his grey head drooped on his breast. "What can I do, Ancram?" he asked, in a tone so contrasted in its feebleness with his usual self-assured, rather strident voice, that it might have touched some persons with compassion. "What can I do?" Then he seemed to make a strong effort to recover some energy of manner, and added, "If it were not for this unfortunate attack which disables me, I would return with you to Whitford to-night. I would see Castalia myself."

Algernon heartily congratulated himself on the fit of gout which kept Lord Seely a prisoner. There was nothing he less desired than that her uncle should be confronted with Castalia. He represented that the only efficacious help Lord Seely could give under the circumstances would be to furnish them with money to pay their debts and leave Whitford forthwith. He pointed out that Castalia must have felt this herself, when she wrote urging her uncle to get them some post abroad. Algernon became eager and persuasive as he spoke, and offered a glimpse to the man before him, whose pride and whose affections were equally wounded, of a future which should make some amends for the bitter present—a future in which Castalia might have peace and safety at least, and in which her mind might regain its balance. He would be gentle, and patient, and tender with her, and, if they were in a position that offered no such temptations as the post-office at Whitford, the anxiety to all who regarded Castalia would be greatly lessened. Lord Seely was, as he had said, too much stunned by the whole interview, to follow Algernon's rapid eloquence step by step. He felt that he must have time for reflection; besides, he was physically exhausted. He bade Algernon leave him for a time, and return later in the day. He would give orders that he should be admitted at once. "You—you have not seen my lady?" said Lord Seely hesitatingly.

"No; I purposely avoided doing so. She would have naturally inquired the cause of my unexpected presence in town, and I could speak of all this trouble to nobody on earth but yourself, my lord."

"Right, right, Ancram. But my lady will not fail to learn that you have been here, and we must give her some reason."

"I can say, if you choose, that I came to London on post-office business."

Lord Seely bowed his head almost humbly, and Algernon left him. He left him with an air of sombre resignation, but inwardly he felt himself to be master of the situation.

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK I. CHAPTER IV. NIGHT AND MORNING WATCHES.

MR. DALE did not trouble himself to take a last look at the patient, before he retired to his comfortable bedroom. He had done enough, he considered, in the way of attention to his unfortunate companion, to establish his character for good nature, and win golden opinions from the inmates of the very eligible family mansion into which he had found his way in an agreeable fashion, far beyond his expectations. Those expectations had not been at all precise. Mr. Dale had simply obeyed an instinct, when he declared his intention of relinquishing his seat on the coach, and staying to see the unlucky passenger through his mishap. Somebody had come out of the gate of a very nice-looking place, and helped to lift up the fallen man, and that somebody had said he would have the sufferer conveyed to his house; for reasons of his own, Dale wished to go whithersoever Randall went, and he found it unexpectedly easy to carry out that wish. He was accepted in the frankest spirit of hospitality; he found the house charming, and its material advantages decidedly increased by the presence of a very pretty girl. Altogether, this was an accidental acquaintance which he would do well to cultivate. He was no believer in Providence, or he might have thought himself specially favoured in the present conjuncture of events, but he had a gambler's notions about "luck," and here was a stroke of it, if it should not mean any more than pleasant quarters for a few days, and the chance of ingratiating himself with people who lived in the smile of fortune—a chance which did not offer itself to Mr. Dale so often as he could have wished.

Mr. Dale's reverie, however, included subjects of other and deeper moment, and it did not last long. After a while he rose from the couch on which he had thrown himself, and, opening the door of his room, looked out into the corridor. The lights had been extinguished, and all was profoundly quiet. He shut and locked the door; placed the key so as to intercept any possible impertinent observation through the keyhole, half sneering at the uncalled-for precaution as he did so; carefully cleared the writing-table of blotter, paper-case, inkstand, and candlesticks, and removed its cover. After these preparations, he approached the wall where the two portmanteaus stood, and lifted the larger—that which bore the initials E. R.—on to the writing-table.

When he had done this, he paused for a moment, considering the action he was about to commit in all its bearings, like a sensible man.

"He had it in gold, three days ago," he thought; "and if he did not convert it into paper, or do any confounded commercial dodge with it—and nothing could be more unlikely—it's here now. At least, I'll make sure. If he lives, there's no harm done, and I'm no wiser than I was before; but if he dies, as nobody else will know anything about it—unless I'm deuced unlucky, and he recovers enough of his senses to give directions—I shall be a good deal better off than I was before. And even if the worst came to the worst"—what an evil smile that was that crossed his face!—"and he did recover enough to give directions, the odds are that he would give them to me. I'm not much of a friend, and he does not so consider me, but I'm more of a friend than anyone else about him here is, and if he's dying, he'll want to cling to some one; they always do, these feeble people like Randall."

The portmanteau with the initials E. R. upon it was a solid article, in good condition, and secured by two straps, which Mr. Dale unbuckled. He then narrowly inspected the lock, fearing it might be of the spring or patent order, calculated to confound an uninitiated operator; but it was quite simple and ordinary, and a key which Mr. Dale extracted from his waistcoat-pocket opened it readily.

He raised the upper compartment, laid it noiselessly back upon the table, and proceeded to turn over the contents of the lower with a slow and careful touch. For some minutes his inspection produced no remarkable results; the ordinary articles of a man's dress presented themselves. In one corner there was a soft leather case with an elastic strap and a brass clasp. This Mr. Dale withdrew, opened, and searched. Its contents were totally uninteresting. A little packet wrapped in silver paper, and stowed away in a pocket of the case, contained merely some fragments of a fan; broken pieces of some lusciously-scented Indian wood, whose perfume hung about the papers which formed its other contents. Not one of these papers was in a man's handwriting: they were old letters from a woman, addressed to Edward Randall at several places, and the signature, at which Dale looked in the case of ten or twelve, until he was satisfied they were all written by the same person, was of a mysterious kind.

"The letters are ancient history," he muttered sneeringly, "and the writer adopted the hieroglyphic style, it seems. Signs herself neither by name nor initial, but with a crabbed bit of stiff drawing, like the branch of a prim, meagre tree. These mean nothing." He replaced the letters in the case, and the case where he had found it.

There was nothing in the lower compartment to satisfy Mr. Dale's curiosity. He proceeded to examine the upper, in which there was a quantity of linen closely packed. He pressed the layers of shirts down firmly but cautiously, and detected a less yielding substance somewhere among them, under his hand. With the lightest possible touch he sought for this, and withdrew it from its hiding-place. The object proved to be a small flat tin box, like a painter's colour-box, unsecured in any way. It felt heavy, and Mr. Dale handled it with a nod of satisfaction.

"Here we are at last," he said to himself, as he raised the lid and looked approvingly on six rows of golden sovereigns, piled several deep in symmetrical lines, on a lining of green baize, and completely filling the box.

"By no means a bad haul for a small place, and a not very enterprising society;" so ran Mr. Dale's thoughts, as he counted the sovereigns on the topmost lines, and removed one little pile to satisfy himself of the depth of it. "The fools who dropped the two hundred cannot complain, either, that he won and he rode away, for he told them plainly enough it was his last night at the table. He has been a gentleman in his time, this Randall; has seen better days, as they call it; but he has either been burning the candle at both ends, in a strong draught too, or he never had a decent constitution, to be in the state he's in. If he has got fever, it's fever on the top of consumption, and I'm not doctor enough to know whether that is likely—I suppose this man here knows what he is about. Anyhow, I believe Randall is booked, and the Arcadian colonists with the pretty daughter will have to complete their obliging attentions by burying him."

Mr. Dale placed the tin box on the floor while he closed, locked, and strapped the portmanteau. He then replaced it in its original position, and gave the travelling-bag, which he opened with a second key taken from his waistcoat-pocket, its turn of inspection. It contained nothing which called for his special notice, and was laid in a very few minutes in its place on the lid of the portmanteau. This done, he locked up the tin box in the smaller portmanteau—his own—restored all the appliances of the writing-table to their former order, and betook himself, note-book and pencil in hand, to the making of some apparently troublesome memoranda. Whatever their nature might be, they were intended to be strictly private, for they were written in cipher.

"And now," thought Mr. Dale, as he clasped his note-book and restored it to his breast-pocket, "it is all safe, I think, whichever turn things may take. It would be safer if I could have had a look at that pocket-book which lies securely in the good Samaritan's despatch-box; but, as that can't be accomplished, there's no use in thinking of it. If the little he said about himself be true, there's no one at the other side of the world looking out for Randall, or likely to trouble himself or other people as to that gentleman's resources. People are generally wise enough to know that inquiries after an individual under a cloud are more likely to lead to the discovery of debts than to the revelation of assets. I must not be too secure, and I will not; but the odds are tremendously in my favour. And now for a good sleep, and an early visit to the patient to-morrow morning."

The night passed in the sick man's room with but little to mark its progress. Mrs. Simcox, the nurse, was by no means of the Gamp tribe; but neither was she of a sentimental turn, and the best security perhaps that one could have that her business would be well done was the fact that it was her "business," and so regarded. She neither let a patient off any remedy or régime ordered for him, or disturbed him by fussy attentions; she avoided the error of zeal, while she practised the virtue of strict obedience to superior authority. Well trained and free from "views," Mrs. Simcox was a valuable person, and Mr. Randall was safe in her hands. She rarely committed herself to an opinion as to the probable result of any illness in which she attended; but she saw, shortly after she was left alone with him, that her present patient was in a bad way, and the circumstances of the accident, and his being installed at Mount Kiera Lodge, were sufficiently unusual to touch the woman's fancy, and to rouse her to more than common interest in him.

There was not much suffering in the case; the injury inflicted by the fall was of a nature to numb pain, and the nursing of it was not difficult. But the experienced woman, sitting by the bed-side in the night watches, and noting attentively the half-open eyes, the dry harsh skin, the darkened mouth and heaving nostrils of her patient, conscious of the shadow over the face which seemed to float between it and her own, made up her mind about Mr. Randall's prospects with more decision than his fellow-traveller had ventured to define them. Seeing, likewise, that it was the face of a man in the prime of life, and had once possessed the good looks which dispose all women favourably to their owner, she made her mind up with a touch of genuine regret.

He had friends somewhere, of course, though here he was under the roof of a stranger, and it would come hard upon them to hear that he was gone, thus. It would come hard upon him, too, poor fellow, when he should come to himself, struggling out of this semi-unconsciousness to the recognition of the fact, to the sight of the strange faces which were to be the last his eyes should rest on, and the sound of the strange voices which were to be the last his ears should hear. She felt pretty sure such consciousness would come, and that, when it came, the end would not be far off. Better for him, if it were not to come at all; if he could change the semi-slumber which held him now, to all appearance, painlessly, for "the sleep which knows no waking;" better, but not likely; her experience told her that. Life would make one more vain assertion of itself before it should be quite worsted in the war which disease had been waging with it, with this man's body for a battlefield, for many a day. Ah, well! it would be better than dying in a hospital, after all; there would be only strangers near, but kind strangers, gentlefolk, like himself—like what he was once, at all events—and that was a sweet-looking lady she had seen when she arrived.

In the early morning, when the night-light had been extinguished, and the welcome sounds of household life were breaking in upon Mrs. Simcox's watch, she was roused from a permissible doze by a cautious tap at the door. She rose, and found that her early visitor was a person whom she had not seen before. A rather tall man, with dark eyes, hair, and moustache, stood without, and as she peeped round the edge of the door in the peering way characteristic of those whose attention is habitually directed to the shutting out of draughts of air, he addressed her with politeness:

"How is your patient this morning, nurse?"

"I can't say," was the rejoinder. "I don't know till Dr. Gray tells me." ("It's that Dale, for sure," thought Mrs. Simcox, "he's the only man in the house besides the master; and, what's more, I know I've seen him before; and there's something hid away in my mind against him. I'll find it, and in the meantime I won't be too civil to him.")

"Has he passed a good night?"

"Neither good nor bad," answered Mrs. Simcox, withdrawing her head, and showing so unmistakable an intention of shutting the door, that Mr. Dale took hold of the external handle. "There's no change to be expected."

"I will come in and see him, if you please."

"I think you had better not, sir;" she added the civil monosyllable hesitatingly. "It's fever, and there's no knowing what disturbs a sick man, and what doesn't."

"I am the sick man's friend, and the only person in the house who knows him—and I mean to see him," said Mr. Dale, in a tone of not unreasonable anger, making so decided a movement to enter the room that the nurse had to fall back, or be ignominiously pushed away by him.

"Oh, certainly, sir," she said. "I only obey the doctor's orders; if other people break them, it's no fault of mine."

She stood aside. Mr. Dale walked into the room, now luminous with the light of the summer morning, gently filtered through persiennes and curtains, and approached the bed. He closely inspected the sick man, examining him as critically as if he had been a doctor—the nurse, meantime, eyeing himself almost as closely—and said:

"He seems to be very bad indeed. Has he spoken at all?"

"Oh yes; he's spoken a good deal, but nothing I could make out. His head seems full of a journey he was going on."

"Very likely, poor fellow; nothing more probable; for he and I were going back to England together."

Mrs. Simcox made no answer in words, and betrayed no curiosity, but she shook her head with easily-interpreted significance.

"Do you think he knows anything that is going on in the room?"

"I shouldn't like to say, sir. That's a thing nobody can't answer for off hand; leastways, they don't ought to. I've been surprised many a time, when my patients have recovered, at the things they've gone over quite correct, that have been said and done when we thought they knew nothing about anything, and were only just—not dead, for you couldn't call it alive; and so I never give my opinion about what sick people know, or what they don't know."

"I will remain with him awhile, if you would like to get away for a bit, and have your breakfast."

The offer was a tempting one, and, coming from the only person in the house who had, so to speak, any right in her patient, Mrs. Simcox considered herself entitled to avail herself of it.

In a more civil tone than she had hitherto adopted in speaking to Mr. Dale, she said that she would be glad to get into fresher air for a few minutes, and left him sitting by Edward Randall's bed.

When she returned, the few minutes had stretched to a good half hour, but she had not been required. The condition of the patient was unchanged. He looked fearfully wan and wasted in the morning light; his brown hair lay dank and scattered about his sunken temples, into whose hollows it seemed as if a finger, dipped in dark blue, had been pressed; the crust of fever stained his chapped lips brown; and over all his face there brooded the indescribable look of anxious melancholy, which in mortal sickness does not yield even to the effacing power of stupor.

On her return Mr. Dale rose.

"He has hardly moved," he said, "and has not spoken a word. I will leave him now, and see him again when the doctors come. Dr. Gray brings another with him, I understand?"

"Yes, sir, Dr. Marshall."

Dale left the room, and had hardly done so when Mrs. Simcox said, half aloud, slapping her knee with her hand, "I have it. Dr. Marshall's name has brought it all to my mind. I remember now, when I saw this Dale, though it was only for a moment, and how I came to know his name. Bessy West! Of course it was Bessy West!"

The association of ideas evidently interested Mrs. Simcox, for she pursued it for several minutes, sitting with her eyes fixed upon the floor until a slight matter diverted her attention. A sudden ray of light struck the matting, and illuminated a small object which lay on it, between the foot of the bed and the window. The sparkle caught Mrs. Simcox's quick eye, and she went to see what caused it. She found the glittering object was a key, and presently she espied a second.

"These have been shook out of his pockets," she said to herself, "when they took his clothes off here, and they don't ought to lie about. I shall give them up to Mr. Pemberton." This she did at the earliest opportunity, and Mr. Pemberton, recalling the fact that Dale, in handing him the sick man's keys, had let them fall, easily accounted for these two being found on the floor.

"The chain was unscrewed, of course, and they dropped off. Thank you, Mrs. Simcox. It would have been awkward if they had been lost, for one of them looks very like the key of a valise."

John Pemberton added the two keys, in the nurse's presence, to the articles of his unfortunate guest's property which he had on the previous evening deposited in his despatch-box, and he examined the keys already there. He had guessed rightly; the screw which should have joined the chain was unfastened.

This trifling incident was succeeded by Mrs. Simcox's report of her patient's condition. She looked, and was, very tired; and she learned with gratitude that Mrs. Pemberton intended to replace her for some part of the day. As for the question of infection, she could not say; but, for her part, she was always of opinion that any mischief there was to be done in that way was done from the first—it was general, and "got about in the house," and couldn't be helped. The best way was for people not to think about it, though of course it was too bad to get into trouble through strangers. John Pemberton cut the good woman rather short in her rambling talk, and hurried out to meet the doctors.

"Decidedly the juvenile stepmother is Mrs. Harris herself," thought Mr. Dale, when he found himself breakfasting without his hostess; and his vanity was somewhat ruffled. Mrs. Pemberton was singularly devoid of curiosity, to say the least of it, if she did not feel any on the subject of her as yet unseen guest; and this supposition stimulated his curiosity not a little. John Pemberton, also, was absent, and only Ida met the stranger at the breakfast-table — met him with the ease and kindliness of a well-bred, unaffected girl, and explained her father's absence by telling him the doctors had arrived to hold their consultation upon poor Mr. Randall. Ida believed he was no better.

"No better, but no worse, I think," said Dale; "I have seen him this morning, and had a talk with the nurse."

"I am very much obliged to Mrs. Simcox," said Ida, handing him a cup of tea; "she has said something to papa, which has put him off the notion of sending me away. It would have been horrid to have to go."

"Yes; you would have been bored, and what a loss to—those you must have left behind," said Dale, with just the affectation of ending the sentence differently from his first impulse, which made it almost an impertinence.

Ida, whose instincts were as true as her inexperience was complete, looked a little surprised, a little haughty, and said, after a moment's pause:

"I was not thinking about whether I should be bored or not, Mr. Dale; I was thinking about leaving my father and Mrs. Pemberton in trouble and anxiety."

Dale felt that he had made a false move, and recorded the hint. The pretty daughter of the Arcadian colonist went in for duty and principle, sentiment and sacrifice, did she? Very good, he knew the jargon of that sort of thing, as well as many other kinds of jargon. Ida, having made her majestic little protest, turned the conversation back to the sick man.

"I suppose," she said, "he is too ill to know, otherwise it would be dreadful to him to be in a strange place, with strangers. Only think what illness must be away from one's home and one's own."

The girl's sweet dark eyes were moistened with bright tears at the image of distress her fancy conjured up.

"Don't you think it depends on the place and the people?" said Mr. Dale, with conciliatory sympathy. "Strangers like your father, and a strange place like this beautiful house, don't seem to me to be very terrible adjuncts to such a condition as Randall's. And then you think and talk of home as a young lady who has grown up amid its best blessings naturally thinks and talks, but as few of the men who have to rough it in the busy world could remember, or even imagine it."

She hardly understood him; but his words awakened some vague sorrowful notion of neglected, desultory, wayfaring lives in her mind.

"Do you mean that Mr. Randall has no home?"

"None, so far as I know. I have met him knocking about at two or three places—the last was Goulburn—and he had no one belonging to him at any of them. I don't know anything about his people in England, or whether he has any; but I should say, judging by his style of talking about life in general, that he is a long way better off here than he's used to."

"Poor man!"

"Ah, he is awfully unlucky, even so."

"You have a home, I suppose—I hope—Mr. Dale?"

"In the colony? No. I have a home in England, and a most undesirable one it is; but here I am a mere vagabond. I was tempted out by the gold fever; and all I have to say is, I did not die of it, but I came very near it. I have made enough money to go back, and be not quite penniless on my arrival, while I look out for something to do in England. That is the truth about myself, and it is not interesting, is it, Miss Pemberton?"

She did not give him a direct answer, but took refuge in a safe generality.

"How hard it is," she said, "that money cannot be more evenly divided! It seems to me that some people have too much, that it bothers them; and then one is always meeting others who would be so much the better of a little more."

"One meets the people who would be the better for a little more at every turn; but I have yet to encounter the individual who has too much."

"Oh, have you? I know several," said Ida, smiling with sweet and serene conviction; "and Mrs. Pemberton says in England it's even worse; that the very rich people there are more encumbered with their money than the very rich people here, because there's so much more form and fuss in life."

"Mrs. Pemberton has lived recently in England?"

"Yes, pretty recently. Papa and she have been married five years, and she was here more than a year before that."

"I have not had the pleasure of seeing her yet."

"I assure you it is a pleasure to see her. She is perfectly lovely."

"It is unusual to find a step-daughter so enthusiastic about a step-mother; but Miss Pemberton is unlike the rest of the world in more ways than one."

Another false step! Again she felt, and looked, surprised and haughty.

"If you have breakfasted, Mr. Dale—as there seems to be no chance of papa's coming—I shall ask you to excuse me," were the next words Ida spoke, and she rose as she said them.

He made an eager but imprudent effort to retrieve this second error.

"You promised to introduce me to Dick this morning," he said. "Have you forgotten? I am most anxious to see him."

"I could not go out just now," replied Ida, gravely. "I am not sure but that Mrs. Pemberton may want me, and I must remain within call."

With these words, Ida rang the bell, and walked out of the room, leaving Mr. Dale with an uncomfortable conviction that he had made an unfavourable impression, and an unpleasant consciousness that he had been quietly but decisively snubbed.

The doctors had come and gone. They had made a long and careful examination of the patient, and they concurred in opinion on the case. Mr. Randall might have survived the fever, but the injury received in the fall from the coach must have killed him, not immediately, not even very quickly, and not by a painful death. There was no hope; it was a question of time. Dr. Gray was sincerely concerned for his friends; Dr. Marshall was disposed to be angry with the Pembertons.

"Very Quixotic, I call this kind of thing," said Dr. Marshall, when, their inspection of the patient over, they adjourned to the drawing-room for consultation.

"Very Christian, I call it," retorted Dr. Gray, hotly, "and quite inevitable into the bargain. What the deuce was Pemberton to do?"

"Send him on in the carriage, I should say."

"He would not have lived an hour."

"Perhaps not, but Pemberton didn't know that. And he had better have died in an hour than linger on here for a few days, and bring all this trouble on them. However, it's done, and it can't be undone. We had better see Pemberton now, and be off. Do you come back with me?"

The doctors had come and gone; and John Pemberton had to tell his wife what they said. He went to her at once, and found her seated by the sick man's bed. There was not an atom of colour in her face, but she was perfectly calm, and as she lifted her eyes to her husband's, she saw what he had come to tell her. She drew one deep breath, and her hand closed on the coverlet. John Pemberton took her into an adjoining room, and she was the first to speak.

"There is no hope, John. I have been sure of that all along."

"Poor fellow—I am sorry for him, Mary; but—but, oh, my love, how sorry I am for you!"

She put her arms round his neck, and laid her face on his breast.

"I can bear it very well, John," she said. "And, if there comes a moment when it is very hard to bear, I shall get courage by remembering that it might have been you, and then I should have had to bear that, all the same."

Then she kissed him, and left him, and returned to her post by the side of the dying man, her first love, who had forsaken her, spoiled all her life in her youth, darkened the face of day to her heavy eyes for some of her best years—to quit it no more until the end should come. Every hour of the past was with her there; every hope, every joy, every pang, an infinite pity and pardon, and a grateful, almost awful wonder that there could be so good and noble a man in the world as her husband, and that he should be hers.

John Pemberton told Mr. Dale what the doctors had said, and that gentleman received the intimation with a becoming touch of serious regret for the fate of his friend. He made it additionally serious, perhaps, from a misgiving that he might not be expected to remain at Mount Kiera Lodge. But John Pemberton had no such stuff in his thoughts, and in the next few sentences made it evident that he regarded Mr. Dale's presence as a matter of course.

"Do they give any hope of his recovering complete consciousness?" asked Dale.

"Yes; they hold it to be almost certain; and there will be little more suffering, they think. He is quite quiet now."

"Would it not be well to direct the nurse to have me sent for at once when he does recover consciousness? He may be able to give me instructions as to his wishes, which he would not give to any other person. And he ought not to see only a strange face."

"I will tell her to send for you, of course," said John Pemberton; "but he would not see only a strange face in any case. My wife knew him intimately in England seven years ago."

SOME BAD OLD INDIAN CUSTOMS.

PART II.

"Hanging like a fringe upon the borders of the cultivated plains"—to use Professor Lassen's picturesque expression—the dark-complexioned remnants of the aboriginal population of India, driven to the hills and natural fastnesses of the country by their more civilised Aryan conquerors, have preserved, until quite recent times, the cruel and barbarous usages of their forefathers. Enjoying a bad pre-eminence among these was the inhuman rite of human sacrifice which prevailed among the Khonds not more than a quarter of a century ago. It was not, indeed, until the suppression of the Goomsur insurrection in 1836, that its existence was brought to the knowledge of the Indian Government.

It was then ascertained for the first time by Mr. Russell, a Madras civilian charged with the pacification of Goomsur, that human beings were annually sacrificed by the people of the adjacent hills as an offering to the genius of the earth, symbolised by the rude effigy of a peacock. According to the Khonds, the Sun-god, whom they name Boore, or Bella Pennu, is the source of all good and the creator of the universe. Unfortunately, however, he grew weary of solitude, and called into being Tari, or Thadha Pennu, the earth-goddess, whom he took unto himself as his consort, but who turned out evil and the mother of misery. To appease and conciliate this dread power, the Khonds offered up human life as the most precious of all things, and thus hoped to insure good crops, and to avert sickness and other calamities. The rich colour of the turmeric, their staple article of produce, they believe to be imparted, in some mysterious manner, through the morsel of human flesh buried in their fields; and in some parts it was deemed necessary to propitiate Manicksoro, the god of battles, by the appropriate oblation of human blood. Neither sickness nor death was in their eyes the result of natural causes. Death might be inflicted in battle by the will of the gods, or by wild beasts, into whose bodies certain persons peculiarly endowed have entered through divine will. In like manner it was through the agency of these strange beings that sickness was ordinarily produced, though at times it might proceed from wicked sorcerers who had acquired this mischievous power by unhallowed acts. When a magician of this evil type was discovered, or denounced, he or she was straightway burnt to death, close by the funeral pyre of the deceased.

Human sacrifices were offered up in different ways in different districts. The victim might be of either sex, and of any age, though male adults were preferred as being the most costly, for it was essential that a price should have been given—a prisoner taken in war being therefore unsuitable. Children, however, were often sold by near relations, and even by parents, while kidnapping from the plains, and even from other hill-tribes, was a common and not unprofitable profession. Prices, of course, varied according to circumstances, from so small a sum as three or four rupees to fifty, eighty, and even a hundred. Money, however, being scarce, it was usual to pay in kind, at the rate of twenty-five to forty gunties each—a buffalo, a jug, a goat, a brass pot, or any other article of live stock or household furniture, being reckoned as a guntie. Persons purchased or reared for sacrifice were termed Meriahs, and were always well treated until the fatal hour arrived. They were indulged, indeed, in every wish, and the females often obtained a respite by bearing children to the village youths, though their offspring were devoted from their birth to the earth-goddess, and their fate was shared by their mothers when past the prime of life. The actual sacrifice was performed by a jani, or priest; but the pooja, or offerings of incense and flowers, to the idol, was the province of a Khond child, under seven years of age, called "Toomba," who was maintained at the public cost in a state of isolation. For a month previous to the sacrifice, the intended Meriah was hung with garlands, and became the centre of much riotous debauchery. On the last day but one, the victim, well-nigh stupefied with intoxicating drugs, was placed at the foot of a post, surmounted by the "counterfeit presentment" of a peacock, while the assembled multitude danced around him in a ring, singing hymns to the goddess. On the morning of the sacrifice the Meriah, still in a state of stupefaction, was anointed with oil, and borne in procession round the boundaries of the village, preceded by noisy music. Having returned to the post, a hog was killed, and its blood allowed to flow into a pit made for the purpose. The poor wretch was then thrown down, and his face pressed into the gore until suffocation ensued, when the priest cut out a piece of his flesh, which was buried near the spot as an offering to Thadha Pennu. The spectators thereupon flung themselves upon the dead body, hacking and tearing it with their sharp knives, each anxious to carry off to his own fields a morsel, however small, of the consecrated victim. The head and face were alone spared, and either burned, or buried with the bare skeleton. The rites concluded with dragging a buffalo calf in front of the post, and cutting off its forefeet. On the morrow the villagers again gathered to the spot, the women dressed and armed as men, and releasing the miserable calf from its sufferings, cooked and feasted upon its carcase. To the priest was usually given a hog, or a calf, with a little rice, and another day was wasted in eating, drinking, and dancing.

Among some other tribes it was customary to fix the victim between two bamboos—one placed across the shoulders and the other across the chest—and to press them together till life was literally squeezed out. In other places the neck was thrust into a bamboo, cleft in two, when the priest broke the ankles, knees, elbows, and wrists with a curiously-curved axe, sharp as a razor. In their eagerness to possess themselves of a morsel of the flesh, the worshippers often turned their knives upon one another, and severe wounds were given and received In yet other districts the mob would rush upon the living but stupefied Meriah, tearing the flesh from the bones, but carefully avoiding the head and the bowels, which were burnt with the skeleton, and the ashes mixed with the new grain as a preservative from insects. Sometimes the Khonds beat the Meriah to death by striking him on the head with their heavy metal bangles, supplemented by a slit bamboo applied to his throat; sometimes death was inflicted by stoning, or by blows with a bamboo. Indeed, the varieties of this horrible form of murder were almost infinite.

Though very generally prevalent, human sacrifices were not absolutely universal throughout Khondistan. Wherever a close intercourse with the plains had been established, and wherever the influence of the less ferocious Hindoo was appreciably felt, the Khonds had gradually substituted the inferior animals for human beings, while still retaining their old superstition that, to propitiate their deities, the effusion of blood was indispensable. But if in a few villages the Meriah sacrifice was discontinued, there were others in which twenty would be offered at a time. Everywhere an ample supply of victims was kept ready. In several districts from fifty to one hundred were found by the British officers, commissioned to effect the suppression of this odious rite. During the cold season of 1848-49 no fewer than three hundred and seven Meriahs were rescued, and in the spring of 1854 Colonel Campbell was able to report that, with the assistance of his zealous subordinates, he had succeeded in rescuing one thousand two hundred and sixty Meriahs in all, and in registering eight hundred and thirteen Poossias—that is, Meriah women and their illegitimate children, who were thereby secured from danger and molestation. Some difficulty, however, was experienced at first in inducing the Meriahs to apply themselves to any labour or handicraft by which to earn a livelihood, and some of them even returned to the hills, preferring a short life with idleness, to length of days with drudgery. Perhaps the most efficient means of reclamation have been the roads constructed within the last twenty years, affording easy means of communication between the hill country and the plains, and opening up to the Khonds a new career of industry. Of one particular road Colonel Campbell reported in 1853, "Already is the road well frequented by Brinjaries carrying cotton to the coast. About twenty thousand bullocks have passed this season, and these will return loaded with salt. The Khond inhabitants, instead of waiting in their villages for the arrival of the travelling merchants, who at certain seasons ascend the mountains to purchase turmeric, oil seeds, and other produce, now carry these articles to the weekly market at Doi, near Sohnpore (on the Mahanuddee); obtain better prices; and purchase what they may require at more reasonable rates. I met several large parties of Khonds and Ooriahs going to the fair, and among them a good many women, who, until the opening of the road, had never ventured on the journey." The same humane and intelligent officer had the gratification of receiving the thanks of the chiefs of many districts and villages, for having prohibited human sacrifice, without any increase of sickness, and without any injury to the crops. In some places he was asked what they were to say to the deity, and on being told to say what they pleased, the head man exclaimed: "Do not be angry with us, O goddess! for giving you the blood of beasts instead of human blood, but vent your wrath on that sahib who is well able to bear it. We are guiltless." And thus, within the space of twenty years, the horrible practice of human sacrifice was stamped out in an almost inaccessible country, three hundred miles in length by one hundred in breadth, and not only were hundreds of lives saved for the time being, but the slaughter was averted of thousands of inoffensive beings in the coming years.

Not more than fifty years ago European magistrates were not unfrequently surprised and pleased to come, in their official circuits, upon a village exceptionally clean, neat, and respectable, inhabited, apparently, by a superior order of peasants, prosperous and well conducted. In such cases the domestic relations were invariably marked by gentleness and indulgence on the part of the parents, to which the children responded by obedience and affection. Little did the English officers imagine, as they addressed a few words of compliment and praise to the head man of the community, that they were surrounded by the most skilful and dangerous murderers the world has ever witnessed, or that the intelligent, respectful old man, to whom they were speaking, was the leader of a gang of stranglers, and accessory to the violent death of, perhaps, several hundreds of human beings. There were no symptoms of recklessness or remorse. Compassion and repentance were alike uncalled for in those whose acts were regulated by the direct guidance of a divine power. The goddess Bhowanee demanded human victims of her worshippers; and the happiest man was he whose hand had despatched the greatest number of souls to Hades. In the beginning, indeed, the Thugs were Mohammedans; but, after a time, Hindoos were initiated, and a curious compromise effected between the two creeds. Bhowanee, or Kalee, was assumed to be another name for Fatima, Mohammed's daughter, and the spouse of Ali; and, so far, a common faith united the followers of the two opposite and adverse religions. It was Bhowanee who sent the omens that guided her votaries to their victims, or stayed their hands when the moment was inauspicious, and who, for a time, disposed also of the bodies of the slain. In the latter days, however, the Thugs were left to their own devices to efface the evidences of their guilt; for, despite the injunctions of the goddess, one of them had presumed to look back after quitting the scene of slaughter, and had seen Kalee in the act of devouring a corpse, whose head and feet alone projected from either side of her cavernous mouth. Still, she did not utterly abandon her chosen people, but bestowed upon them one of her teeth for a pickaxe, a rib for a knife, and the hem of her garment for a noose. These instruments were all sacred, especially the pickaxe, which, called in profane language a "kodalee," became known to the initiated as a "kussee," after it had been solemnly consecrated by certain rites, rather grotesque than awe-inspiring.

With a view to disarm suspicion, the Thugs usually travelled in small parties, which could rapidly concentrate at a given point, and as rapidly disperse; and with the exception of those who carried the corpse-knives or daggers, they had no weapons of any kind. It thus seemed natural enough that they should seek to place themselves under the protection of those who went armed to the teeth, and this favour was seldom, if ever, refused to the courteous, obliging, intelligent travellers, of whom there were always some who could relieve by music and song the wearisomeness of the long halts during the fierce mid-day heat, or in the darkness of moonless nights. At times the Thugs and their intended victims would proceed together for several days, until a favourable opportunity presented itself. If assistance were needed, signals were made by the dust of the road, by stones, and by leaves, which were sure to bring up comrades following in the rear; and, as a rule, the Thugs preferred to be in a majority of three to one, though at a pinch they would venture upon their task with smaller odds. For choice, they selected the evening, when all were carelessly seated or reclining upon the ground, chatting, laughing, smoking, and enjoying themselves. By degrees the Thugs would so arrange themselves that when the jhirnee, or signal, was given, one seized the victim by his hands, another by his feet, while the third from behind dexterously drew the "roomal" round his neck till the vital spark had fled. The bodies were then slashed, and a somewhat shallow trench excavated, into which the dead were hastily flung, after being stripped of clothes and ornaments, when the earth was quickly filled in and trampled down, and the gang proceeded onwards in search of other prey. It is on record that sometimes from a dozen to twenty days would elapse before the fitting moment arrived, and, even then, it would occasionally happen that the business had to be accomplished while the travellers were on foot. Even horsemen were sometimes attacked, though only in very small parties, the chance of escape being multiplied by the restlessness or viciousness of a horse. As for pedestrian travellers, scarce any numbers availed to save them, parties of forty and even of sixty being summarily and ruthlessly despatched. Strictly speaking, it was forbidden to kill women or individuals who were maimed, but the prohibition was seldom remembered in the presence of temptation, and to this unmindfulness of Kalee's injunctions the Thugs attributed their ultimate discomfiture and suppression. Though for the most part broken up into small detachments, a gang of three or four hundred Thugs would concentrate with incredible swiftness, at any point where their leader needed their united co-operation. A rich booty often rewarded their patience. In one instance so large a sum as sixteen thousand pounds was secured, but more commonly the prize would consist of wearing apparel, precious stones, and a few thousand rupees. Religious mendicants were exempted from strangulation, but at times they persisted in blindly rushing upon their fate, and on their persons would be found strings of pearls, little parcels of gems, and a good round sum in hard cash. Care was taken not to interfere with Europeans, for the twofold reason, that they seldom carried about with them anything more valuable than their firearms, and that they would certainly be missed, and close inquiries instituted to account for their disappearance. Besides, there was little chance of persuading a European to accept their company, or to rest anywhere save in his own tent, or in a Dakh bungalow.

After a murder, a feast was almost invariably celebrated, the chief dish at which was a quantity of goor, or coarse sugar, and it was believed that no one who had ever tasted of the consecrated dainty, whether initiated or otherwise, could resist the heaven-inspired impulse to Thuggee. The division of spoils was conducted in a very methodical manner, and with a scrupulous regard for honesty. Nor were the sick forgotten, or those who had been left at home to guard the families of the absent. The best proof of their mutual loyalty is the length of time the horrible fraternity were permitted to flourish, without exciting the suspicion of English officials. Their doings, indeed, were not unknown to native rajahs, nawabs, and other influential persons, but their silence was secured, partly by terror, partly by self-interest, for the Thugs never failed to propitiate the powerful by goodly gifts, while they carefully confined their operations to parties of wanderers, strangers to the district in which their last hour arrived. It has been suggested that the Thugs derived their origin from the Sagartii mentioned by Herodotus in his description of the army of Xerxes, as a pastoral people of Persian descent, whose only weapons were daggers, and a lasso of twisted leather, from which neither horse nor man could escape if once the noose were tightly drawn. Be that as it may, the road between Agra and Delhi was rendered unsafe at the time of Thevenot's visit, in the seventeenth century, by robbers, who employed "a certain rope, with a running noose, which they can cast with so much sleight about a man's neck, when they are within reach of him, that they never fail so that they strangle them in a trice." The brotherhood then consisted of seven clans, who were expelled from Delhi for murdering an imperial favourite, whose exactions had become intolerable. The different families thereupon dispersed themselves over India, from Mooltan to Arcot, their very existence being concealed from the British Government, until the fall of Seringapatam, at the close of the last century. The work of suppression went on slowly until Lord William Bentinck appointed a commission, invested with extraordinary powers, for the specific purpose of hunting down this monstrous institution. In the space of ten years, no fewer than three thousand six hundred and eighty-nine Thugs were apprehended, of whom four hundred and sixty-six were hanged; one thousand five hundred and four transported; nine hundred and thirty-three imprisoned for life, and eighty-one for shorter periods; while eighty-six were liberated on bail; ninety-seven acquitted; and fifty-six admitted as approvers; twelve escaped, and two hundred and eight died, before their guilt could be brought home to them.

Thuggee, however, was not even then stamped out, nor was it until 1853 that the last was heard of that detestable fraternity. At the School of Industry, founded at Jubbulpore, the sons of old Thugs are taught various useful trades, and have learned to look with abhorrence upon the calling of their forefathers. At first the evidence of the approvers was accepted with considerable distrust, and, indeed, many of their stories appeared too horrible to believe, until General, then Captain Sleeman, the chief officer of the Thuggee Commission, was sharply roused to a full recognition of the appalling extent to which that crime had been perpetrated. At one place he pitched his tents for the night in a small mango-grove, and all through the dark hours his wife tossed about, tormented by nightmare. At dawn on the following morning, one of the most trustworthy approvers, named Feringeea, desired to see him, and pointed to three spots, beneath which he declared many dead bodies had been interred. "A Pundit and six attendants, murdered in 1818, lay among the ropes of my sleeping tent; a Havildar and four Sipahees, murdered in 1824, lay under my horses; and four Brahman carriers of Ganges-water and a woman, murdered soon after the Pundit, lay within my sleeping-tent. The sward had grown over the whole, and not the slightest sign of its ever having been broken was to be seen." On the ground being opened up, the bones of the murdered were found as indicated, and the approver then offered to show many similar receptacles close at hand; but Captain Sleeman had had enough for one day. That officer afterwards discovered that, during the three years he was magistrate of the Nursingpore district, and flattering himself with the notion that no crime could be committed without coming under his cognisance, there was actually a Thug village only a quarter of a mile distant from his court-house; while, a few miles away, the remains of upwards of a hundred murdered men lay mouldering in the groves of Mundaisur. This Feringeea, in the course of a single expedition, had assisted in strangling one hundred men and five women; and it was discovered that, of twenty Thug approvers, the least experienced had witnessed twenty-four murders, while one had been present at nine hundred and thirty-one; the average for the twenty giving two hundred and fifty-six each. In Oudh the tracks of the Thugs covered one thousand four hundred and six miles, in the course of which occurred two hundred and seventy-four Beyls, or places where wholesale murders had been committed.

There were also Thugs who followed their calling on the Hooghly, particularly in the Burdwan district. The leader of a gang usually assumed the rôle of a captain of a passenger-boat, with part of his gang at the oars or pulling the tow-rope along the shore, and others seated on deck, disguised as pilgrims, artisans, and small shopkeepers; while others, again, would join travellers on the road, apparently bound for the river. These, on reaching the landing-stairs, would bless their good fortune at finding a well-appointed boat already half-filled with passengers, and would hurry on board, unconscious of impending fate. Presently, the look-out man would strike the deck with his hand three times, whereupon the helmsman would exclaim, "Bhugna ko pawn do" ("to my sister's son give pawn"), and in an instant the pretended pilgrims and artisans would spring upon the astounded travellers, pressing the "roomal" tightly against their throats, and forcing their heads backwards. When life appeared to be extinct, they broke the backbones of their victims, and shoved the dead bodies into the river through a window on either side just clear of the watermark; but not a drop of blood was to be spilt without expiating sacrifices. Women were scrupulously spared by these wretches, and great care was taken to destroy all property of a compromising character. Their doings, however, were well known to the river police, though it was not until 1836 that their existence was so much as suspected by the European officials. It was then discovered that eighteen boats, each manned by a crew of fourteen miscreants, had for years been plying their murderous trade in the most settled part of the Company's territory; but before another year had elapsed, one hundred and sixty-one river Thugs were apprehended, and thirty-eight more placed under surveillance.

Shortly after the fall of Bhurtpore, in 1826, a new branch of Thuggee was instituted by a Rajpoot Thug, named Kheama, alias Nursing Dass, who assumed the appearance of a Byragee, or religious mendicant. His followers numbered in all about four hundred, and limited their wanderings to the country around Delhi, the Upper Doab, Rajpootana, and Ulwar. Under cover of their religious garb, these wretches, who travelled about with their wives and children, had little trouble in conciliating the confidence of strangers, especially poor persons, who gratefully accepted the proffered bowl of milk or social pipe, rendered fatally narcotic by the seeds of the datura. These particular Thugs followed the Megpunna system, which means that they murdered the parents for the sake of the children, whom they sold. Great precautions were taken to prevent the children from witnessing the massacre of their parents, and the wives and little ones of the Thugs endeavoured by officious kindness to keep them from dwelling on the singular absence of their natural guardians. If, however, a child remained inconsolable, and uttered loud outcries, it was speedily put to death. At the same time, as their market value ranged from eighty to one hundred rupees, considerable forbearance was exhibited before recourse was had to extreme measures.

Before setting out on a murdering and plundering expedition, these pious scoundrels never omitted to sacrifice a goat to Kalee, to whom also they consecrated a certain portion of the spoils, which was invested in sweetmeats, fairly divided among the gang. Megpunnaism was a practice of brief duration. Commencing in 1826, it was extirpated by 1840, and not a trace of it now anywhere remains. Its founder, Jemadar Kheama, prided himself on being the son and grandson of a Thug, and the great grandson of a Jeypore Dacoit. General Sleeman was of opinion that Thuggee was originally introduced by Nizam-ood-deen Ouleea, who rivalled the Emperor Toghluk himself in pomp and splendour, and was supposed to be possessed of the Dustol Ghyb, or supernatural purse, but whose riches were probably acquired through his organised system of murder.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

STANDING on the threshold, with her wakening heart and mind,
Standing on the threshold, with her childhood left behind;
The woman softness blending with the look of sweet surprise
For life and all its marvels that lights the clear blue eyes.

Standing on the threshold, with light foot and fearless hand,
As the young knight by his armour in a minster nave might stand;
The fresh red lip just touching youth's ruddy rapturous wine,
The eager heart all brave, pure hope, oh happy child of mine!

I could guard the helpless infant that nestled in my arms;
I could save the prattler's golden head from petty baby harms;
I could brighten childhood's gladness, and comfort childhood's tears,
But I cannot cross the threshold with the step of riper years.

For hopes, and joys, and maiden dreams are waiting for her there,
Where girlhood's fancies bud and bloom in Apri’ golden air;
And passionate love, and passionate grief, and as-sionate gladness lie,
Among the crimson flowers that spring a youth goes fluttering by.

Ah! on those rosy pathways is no place for sobered feet,
My tired eyes have naught of strength such fervid glow to meet;
My voice is all too sad to sound amid the joyous notes,
Of the music that through charmëd air, for opening girlhood floats.

Yet thorns amid the leaves may lurk, and thunder-clouds may lower,
And death, or change, or falsehood blight the jasmine in thy bower;
May God avert the woe, my child; but oh! should tempest come,
Remember, by the threshold waits the patient love of home!

CAPTAIN NARES AND HIS COMPANIONS: WHAT ARE THEY NOW DOING?

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

Many of us here at home are asking the question selected as a title for this paper; not merely the relatives and personal friends of the officers and seamen on board the two ships, but others who admire pluck combined with prudence, discipline tempered with kindness, and adventure rendered valuable by scientific research. According to all human probability, Captain Nares and his companions in the Alert and the Discovery are now iced up in the region northward of Baffin's Bay, somewhere between eighty-one and eighty-four degrees north latitude. Winter is one prolonged night in those Arctic solitudes. The sun, even when the sky is clear, is not visible for three or four months together, as he does not rise above the horizon. The men would not so much mind the intense cold if they could only see about; but where there is nothing but lamp-light and lantern-light, rambling is difficult, even if not dangerous, on the ice surrounding the ships; while within board the daily duties at such a season are comparatively few, seeing that sailing, steaming, steering, reefing, unreefing, casting anchor and weighing anchor, are alike brought to a standstill under such circumstances. The washing, scrubbing, cooking, eating and drinking, bed-making, fire-supplying, clothes-mending, and other daily duties occupy a certain number of hours; but, unless the men sleep something like sixteen hours a day (by no means a desirable achievement to persons in good health), their spare time will hang terribly heavy on their hands—supposing no special means are taken to prevent it.

What Captain Nares and his companions are now doing, therefore, resolves itself chiefly into an inquiry—how are they amusing themselves? What are their occupations for the wearying hours of hyperborean darkness? It seems to us that there cannot be a better opportunity than this of showing what was done, in the direction now under notice, by the best of all Arctic explorers, Parry; the best of all in this respect, that he was the first to invent or discover the art of wintering in the Arctic regions, and of keeping all his men as healthy and cheerful there, as they would have been at home. Parry's voyages are pretty accurately known; but Parry's detailed account of his first wintering is not so familiar. The reader will not be sorry to be posted up on this subject, for it will supply him with the best of all clues to the probable doings of Nares and his companions at the present time.

As geographical discovery is not our present topic, we will pass it over as briefly as possible. In 1818 the Admiralty sent out two expeditions—one to discover a north-west passage to the Pacific, the other to reach the North Pole if possible. Captain Buchan and Lieutenant (afterwards Sir John) Franklin, in the Dorothea and the Trent, took the Polar route, but barely succeeded in getting beyond Spitzbergen. Captain (afterwards Sir John) Ross, and Lieutenant (afterwards Sir William Edward) Parry, in the Alexander and the Isabella, were entrusted with the north-west expedition. Ross arrived at a conclusion that there was no outlet from Baffin's Bay towards the west, likely to be available for a passage to Behring's Strait and the North Pacific. Many of his officers strongly dissented from this view, but were obliged to defer to him. On the return of the ship to England, dissatisfaction was felt in official circles; and another expedition was planned for 1819, to examine the west coast of Baffin's Bay more thoroughly than Ross had done. The Hecla and the Griper were fitted out, and placed under the command of Parry and Hoppner, the former being the responsible leader. In that same autumn Parry and his companions discovered Barrow Strait, Prince Regent Inlet, Wellington Channel, Parry Islands, and Melville Island, thereby earning the Parliamentary reward of five thousand pounds for reaching one hundred and ten degrees west longitude; and by the middle of September the two ships were iced in on the coast of Melville Island, there to pass a long, dark, and dreary winter in a spot they named Winter Harbour.

There, then, we suppose them to be; and now we will see how they passed the winter.

Many of the names which afterwards became famous in the annals of Arctic adventure, are to be met with among the officers of the two ships. William Edward Parry was chief of the expedition; Sabine, chief astronomer; Beechey, lieutenant; Andrew Reid, surgeon; James Ross and Griffiths, midshipmen. Parry, adverting in his "Journal" to the prospect of the two crews wintering in such a region, and the necessity for thinking of everybody and everything on board, drew attention to the fact that "many of his duties were of a singular character, such as had, for the first time, devolved on any officer in His Majesty's service, and might indeed be considered of rare occurrence in the whole history of navigation." Of course it was a matter of good seamanship to attend to the security of the ships, the due stowing and preservation of the provisions and stores, the cleanliness and orderly arrangement of the cabins and store-rooms, with a place for everything and everything in its place. As much space as possible was left on deck for walking, to maintain means of bodily exercise for the officers and men. The health of everyone on board was stringently attended to. Mr. Edwards, chief surgeon, was able afterwards to report on the ample reward which was obtained for these thoughtful arrangements. The whole of the officers and men, with a few trifling exceptions, continued to maintain robust health; and it was not less gratifying to observe that their spirits were in perfect harmony with their bodily powers; insomuch that all, officers and men alike, were as effective at the end of the terrible season as they had been at the beginning. The berths and bed places were kept as dry and warm as possible, under the perplexing difficulties of intensely-low temperature and frozen breath; and this, too, in face of the constant necessity for economising fuel to the utmost practicable degree. Careful regulations were made concerning the quantity and quality of food and drink, in relation to health on the one hand, and on the other to the quantity of provisions in store: very little difference being made between the dietary of the officers and that of the men. The clothing was looked after with the same degree of solicitude. The assistant officers were each made responsible for a certain number of men, in all matters relating to personal cleanliness, and to the tidiness and soundness of the clothing. All the men were mustered for medical and personal inspection every morning and evening; every part of each ship was daily visited by the commander, the first lieutenant, and the surgeon; and the gums and shins of the men were examined once a week, to detect the smallest symptom of scurvy—that dreaded enemy of the older navigators. These regulations were carried out by Hoppner in the Griper, as well as by Parry in the Hecla.

"Their spirits were in perfect harmony with their corporeal powers," said the surgeon. Here we have the key-note to the signal success of Parry's admirable organisation. The commander's journal shows how alive he was to the mysterious influence of the mind upon the body. "Under circumstances of leisure, such as we were now placed in, and with every prospect of its continuance for a very large portion of the year, I was desirous of finding some amusement for the men during this long and dismal interval. I proposed, therefore, to the officers, to get up a Play occasionally on board the Hecla, as the readiest means of preserving among our crews that cheerfulness and good humour which had hitherto subsisted."

And it was done. The officers entered with alacrity into the scheme. Lieutenant Beechey was duly elected stage manager; and the first performance was fixed for the 5th of November, 1819, to the great delight of the ships' companies. Captain Parry himself (we believe, but are not quite certain, that he had been raised from the rank of lieutenant to that of captain, on assuming the command of the expedition) became, temporarily, a hero of the stage, under the modest name of Mr. Parry. He considered that "this example of cheerfulness, by giving a direct countenance to everything that could contribute to it," was not the least part of his duty, under the peculiar circumstances in which they were all placed.

On November 4th the sun made his last appearance above the horizon for three months*; and, on the evening of the next day, the doors of the Arctic Theatre Royal were opened at half-past six, performance to begin at seven. Busy and enlivening occupation it was for the men to fit up the theatre on board the Hecla, and fine fun to the officers to get up and sustain their parts. The first piece represented was Miss in her

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* Captain Nares will have a longer night of winter than this, owing to his higher northern latitude.

Teens, in which Parry played Fribble, and Beechey the lovely Miss Biddy; and there were songs between the acts. The scenery was painted by, or under the direction of, Mr. Stage-Manager Beechey, who was indefatigable in his endeavours to make the whole affair a success. The more masculine performers felt much indebted to the officers who assumed the difficult task of personating the female characters; for, while animated and humorous, it was necessary to preserve a certain delicacy and tact. Parry was fully rewarded for his solicitude by noticing the marked success of this novel kind of cure for monotony. The first evening's performance "afforded to the men such fund of amusement as fully to justify the expectations we had formed of the utility of theatrical entertainments under our present circumstances, and to determine me to follow them up at stated periods. I found, indeed, that even the occupation of fitting up a theatre, and taking it to pieces again, which employed a number of the men for a day or two before and after each performance, was a matter of no little importance, when the immediate duties of the ships appeared by no means sufficient for that purpose; for I dreaded the want of employment as one of the worst evils that was likely to befall us." An excellent judge of human character, wants, and weaknesses was Parry.

The performances being planned for once a fortnight, Mr. Stage Manager found the necessity for appealing to his brother officers in various capacities. He asked them for contributions of new compositions, whether short dramatic pieces, prologues, epilogues, songs, or humorous recitations. His theatrical library—odd volumes which some of the officers had on their shelves—comprised only six or seven pieces; and some of these were not well suited to the limited resources of the company. The appeal was not unsuccessful; for some of the officers put pen to paper, and produced random bits which brought tears of laughter down the cheeks of Jack Tar.

The Royal Hecla Theatre, Arctic Regions, gave its second performance on the 24th of November. The mainstay of the evening was Foote's farce of the Liar, in which Captain Sabine played Tom Wilding; Lieutenant Beechey, Papillion; and Midshipman Ross (afterwards Admiral Sir James Clarke Ross), Miss Grantham. After the farce Lieutenant Beechey, dressed as a sailor, gave a humorous description of a sea-fight; and so ended an entertainment which the men thoroughly enjoyed.

December, like November, was marked by two performances. On the 8th was represented Murphy's farce of the Citizen, with Parry as Old Philpot; Beechey as Young Philpot; and Griffiths as Dapper; the lively Maria fell to the lot of one of the middies. On the 23rd was represented Foote's roaring farce of the Mayor of Garrett; with Lieutenant Beechey as Jerry Sneak; Captain Parry as Mathew Mug; Griffiths as Snuffle; and Ross as Mrs. Bruin. After which came a new entertainment, written for the occasion, and bearing the title The North-west Passage; or, The Voyage Finished.

The old year passed away, and the new year came—1819 gave way to 1820. The Hecla and the Griper were iced up as firmly as ever; mid-day was only a little less dark than midnight; while the cold became more and more intense. The thoughtful commander had every reason to be satisfied with the good effect produced by the four performances in the improvised theatre; every laugh that the men laughed was virtually a doctor, cheering the spirits and keeping up the strength. Mr. Stage Manager Beechey was urged and encouraged to go on as he had begun; and he did so. On the 6th of January was represented Garrick's farce of Bon Ton; or, High Life Above Stairs. The company came out very strong on this occasion: Lord Minnikin was played by Captain Sabine; Sir John Trotley by Captain Parry; Colonel Tivy by Midshipman Ross; Jessamy by Midshipman Griffiths; and Lady Minuetto by Lieutenant Beechey. But oh! the cold! When the thermometer descends below 32° F., frost comes, and we, here at home in England, put on thick coats and warm gloves; when it descends to zero, or 0° F., we say that such a degree of cold has not been experienced in England for ten, twenty, or, perhaps, fifty years; but we are absolutely ignorant of the cold which was felt in the Arctic theatre on this particular evening. Notwithstanding all the means of warming that could be safely adopted, the temperature of the air in the theatre fell to minus 12° Fahr.; that is, forty-four degrees below the freezing-point! It was a trial both to officers and men, actors and audience; but they bore up bravely, and laughed themselves into something like warmth. On the 20th of the same month was given the comedy of A Bold Stroke for a Wife, rather a formidable affair for so limited a company. Parry impersonated Colonel Feignwell; Sabine, Freeman; Griffiths, Sir Philip Modelove; and Ross, Miss Lovely. This young midshipman, as we have said, was much in request for female characters, and was heartily thanked for his willingness to assist in a somewhat difficult department of stage arrangement.

February came, and with it two more performances. The available store of dramas being so limited, repetitions were unavoidable. Miss in Her Teens and the North-west Passage were repeated on the 2nd, while on the 16th the Liar was given for the second time. The month of March had in like manner its two performances, consisting mainly of revivals of the Citizen and the Mayor of Garrett. The sun had now made his longed-for reappearance; preparations were commenced for spring sledgings; and the theatre was closed "for the season." The poets were set to work to compose something to celebrate the occasion; and an appropriate address was spoken. The North Georgian Theatre (this was its official designation) was justly claimed to have done as much good as any theatre ever established; seeing that the object in view, in every way a praiseworthy one, had been fully realised.

In a manuscript Arctic newspaper, of which we shall more fully treat by-and-by, the comment after the last night's performance ran thus: "Thus has ended a series of dramatic entertainments which have served to beguile the tedious season of a long and cheerless winter. In the progress of the entertainments we have taken frequent occasion to express our conviction of the good effect which this kind of amusement has produced among those for whose diversion they were chiefly, if not exclusively, intended; and we may now add that each successive representation has tended to confirm this conviction."

Captain Parry, in his "Journal," gratefully acknowledged the same fact. He summed up the theatrical season with the following remarks: "Our theatrical entertainments continued regularly once a fortnight, and continued to prove a source of infinite amusement to the men. Our stock of plays was so scanty, consisting only of one or two volumes which happened accidentally to be on board, that it was with difficulty we could find the means of varying the performances sufficiently. Our authors, therefore, set to work, and produced a Christmas piece, a musical entertainment expressly adapted to our audience, and having such a reference to the service in which we were engaged, and the success we had so far experienced, as at once to afford a high degree of present recreation, and to stimulate, if possible, the sanguine hopes which were entertained by all on board of the complete accomplishment of our enterprise. We were at one time apprehensive that the severity of the weather would have prevented the continuance of this amusement; but the perseverance of the officers overcame every difficulty; and, perhaps for the first time, theatrical entertainments were invented and performed with the thermometer below zero on the stage."

The researches of Parry in 1819-20 were so satisfactory to the Government, that he was sent out again in 1821, remaining out two winters, and returning in 1823. He transferred his flag to the Fury, and had for his second in command Captain Lyon, in the Hecla. We need say little about their theatrical doings, which were a continuation, with improvements, of those carried on in 1819-20. Captain Lyon was now stage manager, and the fun was right joyous. "Our theatre," said Parry, "was on a larger and more commodious scale, its decorations much improved, and a more efficient plan adopted for warming it, by which we succeeded in keeping the temperature several degrees above zero." The closing night of this second theatrical season, 26th of February, was signalised by a capital performance of the Citizen, and High Life Below Stairs. Parry, fortified by the opinion of the surgeons, drew attention to one of the most notable medical results of the buoyant cheerfulness of actors and audience. "The astonishing effects produced by the passions of the mind, in inducing or removing scorbutic symptoms, are too well known to need confirmation or to admit of doubt; those calculated to excite hope, and to impart a sensation of pleasure to the mind having been invariably found to aid in a surprising manner the cure of this extraordinary disease, and those of an opposite nature to aggravate its fatal malignity."

But what are we to think of a masquerade—a masquerade without ladies? In Parry's third voyage, 1824-25, he resolved to introduce this novel Arctic amusement. Every man, high and low, was invited to aid in the fun; and he afterwards spoke with gratitude of the complete success of the plan. "Admirably-dressed characters of various descriptions readily took their part; and many of these were supported with a degree of spirit and genuine humour which would not have disgraced a more refined assembly. It does especial credit to the disposition and good sense of our men, that though all the officers entered fully into the spirit of these amusements, which took place once a month alternately on board each ship, no instance occurred of anything that could interfere with the regular discipline or at all weaken the respect of the men towards their superiors. Ours were masquerades without licentiousness, carnivals without excess."

It would be worth a few degrees below zero to witness such original masquerading as that!

HOW WE GET OUR NEWSPAPERS.

A DAY WITH MESSRS. W. H. SMITH AND SON.

As the hand points to two o'clock on the illuminated dial of St. Paul's, Covent-garden, there is not much business doing in the great market. It is true that the heavy artillery has already arrived, and the piazza is strongly fortified by outworks of cabbages, ramparts of savoys, and bastions of turnips; but there is no bustle and no noise, save the slow grinding of a waggon-wheel, and the occasional crack of a whip. The middle row is silent and desolate. The cheerful buzz of the mart is hushed—the guardians of the cabbages and cauliflowers being engaged over hot coffee and tea, occasionally "laced" with something strong, in the drowsy public-houses, whose dim eyes are partially opened for their particular benefit. But as I turn away down Wellington-street the gleaming of lights and the roar of engines make me aware that I am on the threshold of Pressland—the domain of Queen Journalia—a much-bepraised and well-abused potentate, who knows not high-day nor holiday, to whom gaslight is as good as daylight, whose work goes on ceaselessly from day to day, from week to week, from year to year. Great packages are pouring out of the Field office, and as I pass the stronghold of the "Sleepless One," my ears are assailed by a clatter which proves that the motto "Nunquam dormio" is no vain piece of rhodomontade. Towards St. Clement Danes are tending carts, cabs, and men, bearing weekly newspapers of all sorts and sizes, of every shade of political and religious opinion, appealing to the serious, to the artistic, to the sporting fraternity. The centre of attraction is the huge building at the corner of Arundel-street—the establishment of Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son, just waking into life.

The ground-floor of this great focus of newspapers is furnished with a battalion of tables with passages between, like the alternate squares of a chess-board. Nearly all the great broad tables are naked and untenanted, save by piled-up sheets of brown paper. On looking closely at these I find, near their edge, a long strip of white paper pasted on and printed with the names of the weekly papers published on Saturday morning, with figures written against them, indicating the number of each ordered by the newspaper agent, or the clerk at the railway stall for whom the parcel is intended—so many Sporting Gazettes, so many Broad Arrows, Bell's Lifes (or should it be "Lives"?), Examiners, Economists, Saturday Reviews, Dispatches, Lloyds, Licensed Victuallers' Guardians, Fields, Land and Waters, Volunteers' Gazettes, &c.

As a mass of Fields comes in, the listless men and boys, who have been standing about, looking now and then at the clock, suddenly dart towards Mr. Arden's great table, craving for their share of the arrival. This gentleman distributes the quires of papers with mingled policy and impartiality among the eager claimants. These are sub-distributors, who again serve out the papers by quires, or by one, two, or half-a-dozen copies, to the men who make up the individual parcels, which are again inspected by "checkers," who see that every parcel is correctly made up before it finally leaves the house. All this is done, as it must be done, in an incredibly short space of time. The organ of the grocery trade arrives, but cannot pass the door without attracting the notice of a quick-eyed youth, who fills the office of receiving-clerk, and jots down every parcel as it arrives. Flung down on the central table, the arrival is at once proclaimed by Mr. Arden. "Grocers!" he exclaims. One word is enough. There is no time for repetition here. There is a rush for "Grocers," and, as these are distributed, the Saturday Review comes in and is duly cut up and divided. The next cry is "Lands," signifying Land and Water, for I must observe that long words are not in fashion at Messrs. Smith's establishment. Cries for more "Money, sir, please," mean merely a demand for the Money-Market Review, as "Mining" signifies the Mining Journal, "Pub" the Morning Advertiser, and "Doctor" the Sporting Times, from the connection of Dr. Shorthouse with that journal. In various parts of the great room the parcels are rapidly and accurately made up and checked—not quite so simple a matter as might appear at the first glance. If all the various newspapers were sent in complete at once the work would be much easier; but, as an actual fact, they come in by instalments—are, in language germane to the matter, taken in "in numbers." Hence a sorter cannot make up his parcel at once. He must take what he can get "to go on with;" and the honest fellow "goes on" quickly and good-humouredly, struggling earnestly to get through his work, for the clock-hands are moving inexorably onward towards the terrible hour when the great "dailies" shall arrive, and the whole energy of the staff be concentrated on the task of getting rid of them, in the short space which intervenes between their arrival and departure. As four o'clock approaches, the ground and basement floors are alive with excitement. Round the distributors' stalls the sorters implore the gift of two "Licensed Victuallers," one "Grocer," four "Lands," three "Doctors," ten "Lloyds," and so forth—each man carrying forward mentally the balance of literature required to make up his group of parcels. As they are completed—some of immense size, others of more modest dimensions, they are checked, packed up strongly in the already directed papers, with the tallies attached, and, falling apparently of their own accord into the great groups destined for the various lines of railway, are swept out of the way, stowed inside and outside the well-known red carts, and away they go, raising the echoes of the deserted streets. The coming and going is rapid now till about four o'clock, when the tables near the entrance are again bared—ready for the "dailies." At last these come, brought from the newspaper offices, in Messrs. Smith's carts and vans. They come in bulk, unfolded, wet from the press. They come, not in quires, nor even in sizeable packages of a ream or so, but in hundredweights—in tons. To show that my modest description is not exaggerated, I may as well state that the weight of the Times alone, dispatched every morning by Messrs. Smith, amounts to five tons. A great van has just arrived, loaded to the brim, with the outer sheets only of the Thunderer, instantly pounced upon by an eager and active regiment of workers, and carefully checked by the ever-watchful receiving-clerk. No sooner are those advance-guards divided than another van drives up, crammed within, and piled high without, with the first instalment of the Daily News. Next comes the Daily Telegraph, in relays of van and cartloads; the Standard in massive heaps; the Hour, the Morning Advertiser, the Morning Post. Now is the tug of war. Receiving, counting, sorting, checking, all this must be done at racing pace, for the first early paper train starts at ten minutes past five, three from other stations at a quarter-past, one at half-past. The activity and promptitude displayed by everybody are almost infectious. As the great mountains of newspapers arrive, and are seized upon, cut up into hills and hillocks, and dispatched, I feel that I am gradually growing active and industrious. I catch myself walking about with a briskness entirely foreign to my normal condition. Possibly my eye brightens. I feel as if it did. Is it the keen air of a winter's morning which affects me in this unwonted fashion, or is it the bracing breeze of Pressland, the atmosphere of business and bustle, the sharp perception, the careful hurry, the hasty precision, the admirably organised and directed energy which almost takes my breath away? Very little encouragement from the firm and courteous presiding genius would induce me to fall to, and shoulder a pile of the Daily News, and rush wildly with it—whither? By Jupiter! there's a chance! That heap of Standards is toppling over. It is too much for that new hand. I give him a lift, and we both feel relieved.

Papers are still pouring in and pouring out, as the vans tear off to catch the early trains. Not all of these depend entirely upon the central department. At the Great Northern Railway Station at King's-cross, as at the Great Western Station at Paddington, there is a sorting and distributing room, with a well-trained staff of Messrs. Smith's officials, who are "fed" with the "dailies" by carts set apart for their special service, so that the last minute may be worked up, and the last tick got out of the clock, before the train moves out on its northern journey. On the Midland and North Western lines, the organisation is carried a step farther, the parcels for the more distant stations being made up en route for Leicester and Stafford, but the Brighton and other lines are supplied from head-quarters, and there is work enough for more than a hundred men and boys till seven o'clock this morning. On the basement floor more packing is going on, all kinds of odd parcels and work that would interfere with the action of the great human machine above being done down here. It is pleasant to watch the folding engines at work. I am aware that a magnificent printing machine has recently been added to the Times office, which not only prints the paper, but folds it as well—a splendid piece of perfect mechanism, and of great use for such copies of the paper as are required in a folded state. It would, however, hardly facilitate the distribution of newspapers—at wholesale—if they were issued from the offices ready folded. Practical hands tell me that folded newspapers are very well in their way, but "tumble about," and are more troublesome to count and pack than when in the original form. But yet a large number must be folded for distribution through the post. Here are the machines folding away at a great pace. At the side of a frame stands a boy, supplied with quire after quire of material. He pushes each sheet gently under a roller, and then, quicker than it can be followed by the eye, it is whisked to a lower story of the machine, and doubled once, caught by other rollers, and doubled again and again, twice, thrice, four times, and then shot out into a box, whence it is swiftly removed, to be enclosed in wrappers, all ready directed and stamped with postage-stamps of Messrs. Smith's own private and particular pattern. The directions on the wrappers are not written—they are printed—the names of subscribers being kept in type, and printed off day by day as they are wanted. By this method no mistakes can occur, and the work is done cheaper than would be possible with the pen.

The early morning's work over, there is ample time to inspect the other departments of the great house under the shadow of St. Clement Danes. The section devoted to books is full of interest, and is divided into two wings—separate, but yet sympathising with each other—the bookselling trade and the circulating library; both suggestive to the observer of a pyramidal system of book-keeping. Under the central dome sit four-and-twenty bookkeepers, not exactly "all of a row," but divided into eight sections of three in each. As the books arrive from the publishers by the hundred or thousand, they mount to these upper regions by a "lift," and are carefully checked off by a vigilant officer before they are passed into store. A mighty store, indeed! In packages, in bales and boxes, and in bookbinders' boards — on floors, tables, and walls—are regiments, nay, armies of books, cyclopædic and historical, didactic and controversial; books of prayer and books of praise; books of poetry and travel; novels and romances; tales and sketches; brand-new works not yet reviewed; and reprints of authors whose names are known wherever the English tongue is spoken; quaint volumes of maxims, and useful hints on finance and farming, dress and deportment; the art of spelling, and the art of cooking. It is a land of books, carefully divided into counties and wapentakes, cities and towns, hundreds and hamlets. What would the author of the Anatomy of Melancholy, who complained that in his time there was no end to the making of books, have said, could he have forecast that Bookland would have developed into anything like this? Just now, too, the ordinary book-trade is largely increased by the issue of Christmas numbers of magazines, like our own Davy's Locker, and of children's picture-books, "beautiful exceedingly," in covers glowing with purple and gold.

As in the newspaper department, agents and customers, as well as the clerks at the well-known railway stalls, are supplied with books by Messrs. Smith. Confining my remarks to the railway vendors, who are some four hundred in number, I may premise that every keeper of a railway stall is anxious to keep up his stock and increase his business; but he is not left entirely to his own devices. There are inspectors who visit the railway stalls, and form a shrewd idea as to the business doing at them, and the amount of stock which should be placed at the disposal of the local official. He is supplied with a stock-in-trade to begin with, and a regular account is kept with him in a separate book. These books form a little library in themselves, and are interesting as showing how each stall is recruited. As the stock of Mr. Cator, of Screwby Junction, is sold down, he writes to head-quarters for further supplies, which are sent to him in a parcel, the contents of which are checked as carefully as the newspaper packages already referred to, and debited to him in his particular volume. The task of getting the parcels together—not quite so rapid an operation as in the case of newspapers—is simplified by allotting him a separate receptacle, on which his name is written, and in which are put his books, until the complete parcel is made up. So exactly is this department organised, that the number of the packer who makes up the parcel is marked upon it. Mr. Cator's book is not a simple debtor and creditor account, but contains minute signs, which indicate the state in which the "returns" arrive at head-quarters—whether fresh, or damaged by wind and weather, and, if so, to what extent. By these means the stock held by him can at once be ascertained, as well as the condition of his cash account; and a pretty fair idea can be formed of the style in which he conducts his branch of the business, how far his demands for stock have been justified by sales, and also what care he takes of it.

The records of the library department are kept with equal care by an elaborate system of checks, and tallies, and wonderful book-keeping, carried out by another detachment of clerks. Confusion between the bookselling and library departments is prevented by differently-coloured labels and an entirely separate set of books—yellow-backed these, with every man's library account set forth in them, as well as the state of the books when returned to the central office. In snug rooms, at the top of the house, are sub-departments and sub-sections. There is a cap department, for issuing the caps marked with the name of the firm; a card-room, for supplying the packs of playing-cards sold at railway stations; a rug-room, for railway rugs and straps; a string-room, for supplying the many wheels of cord used in tying up parcels; and a sweet-smelling collection of old tea-chests, used for packing books. While I have been strolling through labyrinths of books, and looking at the marvellously-organised machinery by which they are distributed, the newspaper men have been engaged in making out their lists of orders for the evening papers—sent out in similar fashion to the great morning journals, and business has again become brisk in the lower regions; but, of course, to a much smaller extent than during the rush before dawn. Passing through the engine-room, supplying steam-power to the machinery employed all over the house, I come to the printing department.

It must be recollected that Messrs. Smith do not merely sell and lend books; they print them by hundreds of thousands, doing no small service to the reading world by supplying it with cheap editions of classical and popular works. From the printing and binding departments are turned much of that so-called railway literature, which really includes many of the best and pleasantest books in our language. Not only are the books printed, bound, and published by one house, but the very wooden stalls at which they are to be sold are made on the same premises. Here is a carpenter's shop full of bookstalls in every stage of preparation, from the rough deal boards to the finished edifice, inscribed with the name of the firm. Again onward, through legions of printers, engaged on printing in colours—an art much in requisition just before Christmas-tide. And now I cross the threshold of another kingdom—allied, indeed, to Pressland and Bookland, but yet, so far as this aspect of it is concerned, very foreign indeed. It is the realm of King Runnyrede. It is an oddly-shaped region. From the central palace at St. Clement Danes it spreads all over the United Kingdom, in long strips, in spots, and in patches. So long as you remain within these British Islands there is no escaping from King Runnyrede. You cannot take a twopenny ride in any class on any railway without being called upon to pay your respects to that omnipresent monarch. The duty is not oppressive, for he is no stern tyrant, but a ruler of the mildest paternal type. The instant you put your foot within a railway station he takes you in hand, he counsels, he advises, he implores—even in his sternest moments he only questions and remonstrates with you—he never commands, he only "woos you with his *brazen* face." His assertions are bold and uncompromising, but he does not compel you to believe him; and it would be difficult indeed to repose implicit faith in all his assertions. In gold and in silver, in all the colours of the rainbow, he tells you that "Crackstone's Cornflour is the Best," and adds the warning, "Take no other." He does not mince the matter. He does not say it is merely good: he prefers the superlative. The secret is gently insinuated by a group of pretty little girls, who, while gathering cornflowers, have found all at once a box left by some benevolent fairy among the nodding grain—a box filled with great letters, which, as they are taken out one by one and arranged on a bed of poppies, actually assert that "Crackstone's Cornflour is the Best." We are happy until we are told, in glaring black and yellow, that "Crown and Bolster's Cornflour is what it purports to be"—a dig in the ribs for Crackstone evidently. This is bewildering conduct on the part of King Runnyrede, and he is going down rapidly in our opinion, when he brings us up all standing with "Why pay more?" Yes. Why? That is the question, and a very pertinent one. What do you think of yourself, my friend, as the father of a family, for halting between two cornflours, while you are wasting your substance in paying too much for everything? A pretty fellow, truly.

You know the last quarter's rent was not paid. You know that unless money drops like manna from the skies, you will never be able to meet that bill next Monday! Yet you go on in your old way! Be persuaded now, and to-night, before you go to sleep on that bed—which is included in the bill of sale to Maurice Grabenheim—just ask yourself the solemn question, "Why pay more?" After this mournful interrogatory, King Runnyrede counsels us gently: if you want puffs and frills, "Buy of the manufacturer;" if you want tea, "Cornuto's is the Best;" but if you don't like it, you can "Buy at Merchants' Prices." Do you want bread? Here you are. Make your own, and take your choice of baking powder: "Boreman" exults in medals, "Yeastwick" in government patronage. You must be hungry; go to "Ladylove's." No, you are not. Then sustain nature with one of "Silvertop's Soup Squares." Look at the Bull in the Boat—just as he comes over from Australia—what can be nicer? Not pungent enough? Try the "Hallamshire Relish," bound to edge your appetite like a Sheffield whittle! No! You want to read. Here is enough and to spare. Three great competitors—"The Largest Circulation," "World-wide Circulation," "The Largest Daily Paper." Buy them all, and your ideas on things in general will be all the clearer. Your eyes would not stand it! Then "Ask for Stede's Patent Columbian Eye Sparkler," and you are safe. But you want to be off. 'Tis well. Remember the countersign, "The Lion, the Net, and the Mouse." "None is genuine unless signed—" But the train moves on. As it glides out of the station my eye is caught by the terrific announcement, "Accidents will Happen," and the stern command—"Dye at Home."

In Arundel-street I am behind the scenes. I am in the property-room of Harlequin King Runnyrede. I mark his little traps, his neat transformations, and watch his scene-painter, and the careful carpenters who prepare the framework for his great effects. Here is an artist, hard at work on a canvas of huge size, big enough to contain "The World." Here is another, drawing a spirited scene at football. Others picture forth fairy scenes of instantaneous breadmaking, rapid washing with dry soap, or invent enticing questions or pleasant maxims of his majesty's own particular type. Insurance companies have of late become firm allies of King Runnyrede. His subjects supply them with superb almanacs, printed in half-a-dozen different colours, and gilt into the bargain. All these banners of his majesty, which are intended to hang upon the inner walls, are beautifully printed; and when we see that a separate impression is required for every colour employed, it is possible to form some idea of the work got through by his myrmidons. No sooner are the banners completed than they are passed under a perforating machine, in order that they may be strung up, and, to prevent tearing and rending, metal eyelets are punched in by another machine. As I forsake the domain of King Runnyrede to enjoy a stroll round the sumptuous stables, and inspect the clean-limbed, well-groomed horses, the business of whose life is to catch early trains, the partner in the great house to whom I am indebted for my trip through Pressland, Bookland, and the kingdom of Runnyrede, tells me that the whole of this great fabric grew from a desire, on the part of the founder, to catch the early coaches with the morning newspapers, in time to forward them into the country without losing twelve, or, perhaps, twenty-four hours, by letting them wait over till the next coach. To that end the light carts and swift horses, able to catch up the coach if she had started too promptly for the dilatory newspapers of half a century ago. In extreme cases the late Mr. Smith sent an express independent of all coaches and public conveyances whatsoever. His greatest stroke occurred when King George the Fourth died. Immediately on the king's demise a Government messenger was sent over to Ireland to inform the viceroy of that event; but when he arrived, he was astounded to find that Smith's express had beaten him by four-and-twenty hours—in fact, that all Dublin knew more than he did. From that great day the house has prospered even until now.

As I drift out of this very "big mill," I notice that all the workpeople are busily engaged at tea, and find, on inquiry, that no more combustible matter than newspapers is allowed on the premises—lucifer matches and strong drink being specially "tabooed." A placard hanging against the wall catches my eye, with the heading "Provident Fund," under which Messrs. Smith offer to take care of their workpeople's savings, and allow them six per cent. on all sums of ten shillings and upwards—an excellent example to great employers of labour.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LI.

"Rubbish!" cried my lady. "It's a trick. I know the Ancrams, and there isn't one of them, and never was one of them—of the Warwickshire Ancrams, that is—who would stick at a lie!"

Lady Seely was in a towering passion. She had met Algernon Errington on the stairs as he was leaving her husband's room for the second time that afternoon. Algernon had slipped past her with a silent bow, and had refused to return, although she screamed after him at the full pitch of her lungs. Upon this Lady Seely had gone to her husband's room, and in a few minutes had drawn from him the confession that he had promised Algernon to use his utmost endeavours to obtain a post for him on the Continent. And then, on her violent opposition to this scheme, Lord Seely had been led on to tell her pretty nearly what Algernon had told him; dwelling very strongly on the circumstance that Castalia was in a strange excited state, and might not be deemed responsible for her actions. But neither did this terrible revelation make much impression on my lady.

"Rubbish!" she said again. "And if she is in this queer excited condition, what makes her so?"

"Belinda, you do not realise the full extent. This is a more serious, a more frightful matter than you seem to think."

"Oh no it isn't, my lord! You'll see! A young rascal to come here with his cock-and-bull stories, and try to frighten you into getting a berth for him! Why, there's nothing to be had, if one was willing to try, except the consulate at what's-his-name, on the Mediterranean, that Mr. Buller mentioned when you spoke to him about my nephew."

"I thought that might be got for Ancram, Belinda."

"Got for Ancram! Fiddlestick's end! What next? If the consulate is to be had, Reginald shall have it, that's flat!"

Lord Seely lay back in his chair and groaned.

"Yes," cried his wife, her cheeks flaming with anger, until the rouge she wore seemed but a pale pigment on the hot colour beneath, "there it is! He has made you ever so much worse; upset you completely; thrown you back a fortnight, as Dr. Nokes said. He couldn't think what was the matter when he came at one o'clock. No more could I. 'My lord appears to have been agitated!' said he. Agitated! Yes; I'd agitate that young villain with a vengeance if I could get hold of him!"

"But you agitate me—me, Belinda. And, let me tell you, that you are not showing a proper feeling in the case as regards Castalia; my niece Castalia; poor unhappy girl!"

My lady stood up—she had risen to her feet in her wrath against Algernon—big, florid, loud of voice, and vehement of will, and looked down upon her husband in his invalid's chair. And as she looked into his face she perceived, and acknowledged to herself, that it would not do to drive him to extremities; that, on this occasion neither indolence, habit and bodily weakness on the one hand, nor sheer force of tongue and temper on the other, would avail to make him succumb to her. She changed her tone, and began to give her view of the case. She gave it the more effectively in that she spoke the truth, as far as the representation of her genuine opinion went. She did not believe a word about Castalia's having stolen money-letters — Lord Seely winced when she blurted out the accusation nakedly in so many words—Not one word! As to the gossip in Whitford, that might be, or might not; they had but Ancram's word for it. If Castalia was in this nervous, miserable state of mind; if she did pry on her husband, and prowl about the post-office, and even open his letters (that might be; nothing more likely!); if all these statements were true, what conclusion did they point to? Not that Castalia was a thief—my lord put his hand up at the word as if to ward off a stab—but that she was insanely jealous.

The suggestion brought a gleam of comfort to Lord Seely. And it approved itself to his reason. The one explanation was in harmony with all that he knew of his niece's character. The other was not.

"Jealous, eh, Belinda?"

"Of course! Insanely jealous, that always was her character, when she lived in our house. She was jealous of Lady Harriet Dormer; she was jealous of everybody and everything that Ancram looked at."

"Jealous!" repeated my lord musingly. "But to act so strangely; to expose herself to animadversion; to go the length of opening desks and letters! She must have had some cause, some great provocation."

"Nothing more likely! Ancram is good-looking and young; and Castalia—isn't."

"But where did she procure that money without her husband's knowledge?"

"Don't know, I'm sure."

"And her extravagance, and running him into debt as she has done—it seems to point to some mental aberration, does it not, Belinda?"

"Oh, fiddle-faddle, my lord! Why this, and how that! How do we know what truth there is in the whole story?"

"Belinda?"

"Oh, bless you, I'm too old a bird to be caught by any chaff the Ancrams can offer me."

"But, good heavens, Belinda, it is utterly incredible——"

"Nothing's incredible of an Ancram in the way of lying," returned the great lady of that family, with much coolness. "This young jackanapes has got into a scrape down at What-do-ye-call-it. Things have gone wrong in the office—I'll be bound he don't mind his business a bit—he and his wife have got into debt between them. He don't like the place; and after bothering your life out for money, he comes off here without 'with your leave' or 'by your leave,' and asks to be sent abroad. That's my notion of the matter. And any way, if I were you, Valentine, I should take no sort of action, nor commit myself in any way, until I'd had Castalia's version of the story."

Lord Seely pressed his hand to his forehead, and writhed on his chair. "I wish to Heaven that I could go to the place, and speak with Castalia myself!" he cried. "There are things that cannot be written. But here I am a prisoner. It is a dreadful misfortune."

"I can't undertake to go trapesing down there in this weather," exclaimed my lady. "And, besides, I wouldn't leave you just now."

Lord Seely by no means wished that his wife should interfere personally in the matter. He well knew that nothing but discord was likely to arise from any interview between Castalia and her aunt. "There is no one I could send," he murmured. "No one I could trust."

"No, no! It would never do to send anybody at all. This kind of family wash had better be done in private. I tell you what you do, Valentine—you just dictate a letter to me to be sent to Castalia. Send it off at once. When does Ancram return? To-morrow? Very well, then. Send it off at once, so that it shall reach Whitford before he does."

"Why so, Belinda?" asked my lord anxiously.

"Why so? Dear me, Valentine; how st——unsuspicious you are! If Ancram was there when the letter arrived, do you suppose she would ever get it?"

Lord Seely stared at the florid, fat, unfeeling face before him, with a sensation of oppression and dismay. How was it possible to attribute such actions and motives to persons of one's own family, with an air of such matter-of-fact indifference? It was not the first time that his wife's coarseness of feeling had been thrust on his observation to the shocking of his own finer taste and sentiment—for my lord was a gentleman at heart—but this was an amount of phlegmatic cynicism which hurt him to the core. He could not forget that it was his wife who had promoted the marriage of Castalia with this young man. It was his wife who had declared that the Honourable Miss Kilfinane was not likely to make a better match. It was his wife who had urged him to put young Errington into the Whitford Post-office, declaring that the place was in every way a suitable one for him. And now it was his wife who coolly described Ancram as a wretch, full of the vilest duplicity!

The fact was, that my lady was by no means so indifferent on the subject, as her words and manner would seem to imply. She was not pained as Lord Seely was, but angered excessively. She foresaw various troubles to herself and her husband—even the distant possibility of having Castalia "returned upon their hands," as she phrased it, and of having, sooner or later, to find money, or make interest, to get Ancram a berth, which she would more willingly have bestowed on some of her nearer kith and kin. And her fashion of venting her anger was roundly to declare Ancram Errington capable of anything! And in her heart she believed him capable of a good deal of falsehood.

Lord Seely made no immediate reply to his wife's suggestion. He was ill and grieved, and he felt as if his final exit from this world of troubles might not be altogether undesirable. His interview with Algernon had agitated him terribly. His interview with his wife—although she had opened the door for a ray of hope that things might not be quite so terribly bad as he had feared—had certainly not soothed him. But, before the departure of the evening mail that night, he had completed and despatched a letter to Castalia. He had insisted on writing it with his own hand, sitting up in bed to do so, although his fingers were scarcely able to guide the pen.

Meanwhile, Algernon was spending a very pleasant evening. He went to the club to which the Honourable Jack Price had introduced him during the brief butterfly period of his London existence. There he found the genial Jack, friendly, affectionate, expansive as ever: a trifle balder, maybe, but otherwise unchanged. There, too, he found several of his former acquaintances ("old friends," he called them), who, after having his name recalled to their recollection by Jack Price, said, "Hulloa, Errington, where the dooce have you been hiding yourself?" and shook hands with the utmost cordiality. Then Jack Price insisted on adjourning to a favourite haunt of his, and ordering supper in celebration of Algernon's unexpected visit. And the "old friends" were flatteringly willing to do Algernon the honour of eating it. They were mostly unfledged lads, such as affected very often the society of Jack Price, who was really a kind companion, and gave the boys long lectures on steadiness of purpose and energy, illustrated by warning examples from his own career, and delivered amid such agreeable accompaniments to moral reflection as hot whisky-punch and first-rate Havanas. But there were one or two older men: a newspaper editor from Dublin, who had been at college with Jack; and a grey-whiskered major of cavalry, who had served with Jack during his brief military career; and a middle-aged attaché to his majesty's legation at the Grand Duchy of Prundenhausen, who had been a contemporary of Jack in the Foreign Office. And all these gentlemen, being warmed by wine and meat, became excessively companionable and entertaining. The Dublin editor, a fat, short, rather humorous-looking individual, sang Irish sentimental ballads with a sweet tenor voice, and, at the whisky-punch stage of the entertainment, brought tears into the eyes of the cavalry major and Jack Price. The middle-aged attaché did not cry; he considered such a manifestation beneath the dignity of the diplomatic service. And although he affected a bitter tone, and secretly considered himself to be a mute inglorious Talleyrand, much injured and unappreciated by the blundering chiefs at the Foreign Office, yet to outsiders he maintained the dignity of the service, at the cost of a good deal of trouble and starch.

Algernon did not cry either. Indeed, the combination of sentimental ballad and stout Dublin editor struck him as being pleasantly comic. But he paid the singer so easy and well-turned a compliment as put to shame the clumsy "Thanks, O'Reilly!" "By Jove, that was delightful!" "What a sweet whistle you have of your own!" and the general shout of "Bravo!" by which the others expressed their approbation. And then he sang himself—one of the French romances for which he had gained a little reputation, among a certain society in town. The romance was somewhat threadbare, and the singer's voice out of practice; still, the performance was favourably received. But Algernon soon changed his ground, and, eschewing music altogether, began to entertain his hearers with stories about the eccentric worthies of Whitford, illustrated by admirable mimicry of their peculiarities of voice, face, and phraseology, so that he soon had the table in a roar of laughter, and achieved a genuine success. Jack Price was enchanted — partly with the consciousness that it was he who had provided his friends with this diverting entertainment, and explained to every one who would listen to him: "Oh, you know, it's great! What? Great, sir! Mathews isn't a patch on him. Inimitable, what? He is the dearest, brightest, most lovable fellow! What a burning shame that a thing of this sort should be hidden under a bushel—I mean, down in what-d'ye-call-it! By George! What?"

Yes; Algernon spent a very agreeable evening, and thoroughly enjoyed himself. He certainly had a wonderful share of what his mother called "the Ancram elasticity!"

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK I. CHAPTER V. A GHOST LAID.

MR. DALE was taken so very much aback by this communication, that a more ready and quick-sighted man than John Pemberton could hardly have failed to perceive that it had a signification for him, greater than its purport. But John Pemberton did not observe the look of irrepressible annoyance which crossed his face. His mind was busy with the trouble that had fallen on his wife. Ever since she had become his wife, he had been glad to know that she was happy; that she was fenced in from external sorrow; and that there was nothing to trouble her within her home.

And, now, trouble had come to her in a mysterious, fateful kind of way, which he had no power to avert. A strange influence had been suddenly flung, like a deep shadow, upon her life. A long-silent chord of the past had been struck by a hand not his, and the intimate oneness of their two lives was invaded. In the grieved sense of all this, which was oppressing John Pemberton, there was not a single touch of jealousy, or, indeed, of any small personal feeling. He did not think of it with any reference to himself at all, but only with some of that forlorn, puzzled uneasiness and wonder which comes to us with the discovery that a force, which we cannot influence or control, is dealing with the lives of those who are dear to us. In whatever shape it comes, whether it be the lover who comes into the life of a daughter; the bride who comes into the life of a son; or that dread intruder, Death, on whose encroaching presence we gaze with despairing awe; or, in the milder form of an influence of the past before our beloved had become ours, and which cannot be made to include us, it is hard to bear. Hard as a fact; harder as a lesson on our own insufficiency and powerlessness.

John Pemberton was being taught that lesson. Poor Mary! It was so hard on her, and it would make her so miserable. The scoundrel—for Mary's gentle pleading had not changed his mind on that point; he would call Mr. Randall by no harsher name than "poor fellow!" but he reserved the privilege of using the other epithet in the privacy of his thoughts—had turned up again, under the only circumstances which could have enabled him to trouble Mary. "If she and I had met him anywhere, or, if he had heard of her, and sought her out in any trouble, it would not have mattered," he thought. "She would have told me all about it, and it would have passed away; but that he should have been brought here to die, to fill her heart with compassion and sorrow for him, and make the end of her stay here so melancholy, does seem a back-handed blow from Fate."

His mind being thus full of Mary, John Pemberton paid no attention to Mr. Dale's manner, and left him, after a few minutes, saying he had business to attend to.

"Knew him in England, did she?" thought Mr. Dale, as he strolled through the grounds, keeping a look-out for the possible reappearance of Ida. "Then one thing is certain; she will soon find out, if she takes the trouble to ask me any questions, how very little I know about him, and my claim to the next-friend business, and my settling myself down here in consideration of it will look very queer. Who could ever have imagined so unlikely a thing as that? And there's nothing to be done either, that I can see."

A sudden suggestion of his imagination, that Mr. Randall might mention his money and the exact place in his portmanteau where it ought to be found, and also his wishes respecting its final destination, made him feel exceedingly uncomfortable. What a fool he had been to let the keys out of his hands; there was not the least reason for restoring them so immediately; he had been much too precipitate! Then he indulged in cursing destiny, who had seemed to do him a brilliant service, but now had all the appearance of turning it into a scurvy trick, vaguely; and he cursed the unknown and unseen Mrs. Pemberton very distinctly. Finally, he made up his mind that there was no use in worrying about the turn of events, until it indicated itself. Whatever might happen, he had more cleverness to meet it with than these Arcadian people; and he would back himself to meet the emergency when it should arise. In the meantime he wished Ida would make her appearance. The pretty daughter was a decided attraction, and, though he had made a blunder in paying her a florid compliment that morning, it was not a serious one. She was very young and inexperienced, and she had the timidity of her age. She had taken fright for a moment, that was all.

As Mr. Dale strolled among the flower-beds, not losing sight of the house, he indulged in sundry speculations concerning Ida. She was an only child, and her father, evidently devoted to her, was equally evidently a rich man. Was there a lover or an aspirant anywhere about? Girls like Ida Pemberton are not likely to lack such elements in their histories anywhere, and in the colonies it is the custom to marry young. Mr. Dale had no evidence to adduce to himself as grounds for his conviction that Ida Pemberton was unbetrothed and fancy free, except it might be the negative testimony that no mention had been made of any one outside the household, and that her manner had the bright and careless freshness of girlhood, before any deep feeling has laid its mark upon it. He entertained that conviction very strongly, nevertheless, and he felt a strange satisfaction in it, with inquiring into whose origin he did not trouble himself. Audacious as he was, and ready enough to accept with a cynical insolence any interference of luck on his behalf, he probably had not at this time begun to form any scheme in which Ida figured as more than a pleasant adjunct of an adventure which was whimsical and pleasant in certain aspects of it, if rather risky in others.

The sun was growing very powerful, and Mr. Dale was getting tired of looking for Ida, who was with her father in his dressing-room, and had not the least intention of going out. He thought the verandah looked cool and shady, and directed his steps towards it, passing by the front of the house, and turning the angle at the side on which the windows of John Pemberton's study, where the sick man lay, opened to the floor and gave on the verandah. The windows were open, and the inner blind of one was drawn up halfway. Mr. Dale approached cautiously along the verandah, keeping close to the wall, and stealthily looked in.

Mrs. Simcox was not in the room. The patient lay in the wide bed, motionless; his features, wan and sunken; his head, so restless when Dale had seen him in the morning, still and leaden-weighted on the pillow. Dale was standing in the sweet air and the tempered sunshine; a thousand summer scents and sounds were about him. At the other side of that sheet of glass, which interposed between him and the room within, and through which he peered, crouching close by the flower and leaf-covered trellis, was a man going rapidly down to death, and with the shadow already hovering near to him. His dry, wasted hands lay upon the snow-white coverlet, not quite still—there was a slight twitching movement in the bony fingers. Though the face looked more wan and sunken than it had looked in the early morning, there was a less distressing expression upon it, there was less strain in the features; even though there was no speech, something conveyed to the observer that the mind was not so far away from its accustomed tenement as it had been.

The room was in perfect order, and absolutely still. From his post of observation at the window, Dale could catch the short but heavy breathing of the sick man. He had, however, but little attention to bestow upon him; his gaze was arrested by the face and figure of a woman, who, attired in a soft white morning gown, stood by the side of the bed farthest from the window, bending towards the patient; and moving her hands softly and skilfully about his head. The light-brown hair had been closely cropped, and Mrs. Pemberton was applying linen steeped in some cooling lotion to the patient's head.

Her face was quite colourless, and her dark eyes were surrounded with circles almost as dark—the work of watching and of tears. But she was beautiful to look upon for all that, as the man who observed her, unperceived, thought.

"And so this is my invisible hostess! This is Mrs. Pemberton, and she knew him formerly in England, did she? I should say she did, indeed!"

Mary pressed the freshly-steeped linen all over the patient's head, and upon the burning, hollow temples, and then stood, gazing at him, one of his twitching hands held in her cool, soft clasp. Perhaps it was her touch, awaking some strange association in that mysterious condition in which the mind is at once here and not here; when the present and the past are confounded, and all ordinary modes of thought are suspended, so that nothing is usual and nothing is strange. However that may be, Edward Randall opened his eyes, and the light of reason was in them—the expression of brain-guided perception—and they, looking upwards, met Mary Pemberton's. He did not start, he did not cry out; he only sighed, a strange, fluttering sigh, and said, distinctly, though in a whisper:

"Mary!"

She stood quietly, still holding his hand in hers, and betraying no surprise or emotion. A moment later the door behind her was softly opened, and John Pemberton came to her side.

Mr. Dale instantly abandoned his post of observation, and, walking swiftly along the verandah, disappeared round the angle of the house.

"Mary!"

He repeated the word, apparently unaware of the presence of another face close beside that into which he was looking, with the bright searching gaze of the hours in which all the past lives again, and the present and the future blend with it—when the surrender of the citadel of life is near, but its vain vigilance is very keen. The time that the doctors had prepared them for had come.

"Answer him," whispered John Pemberton.

"Yes," she said, steadily; "it is I."

"Where am I? What are you doing here? What has happened?"

"You are in my husband's house. This is he. Do you not see him?"

His eyes moved to John Pemberton, then instantly reverted to her.

"You have been very ill. You had a fall, off the coach, and you were brought here to us. We are very glad to take care of you. But you must keep quiet, you must not excite yourself, or your head will be bad again. Is it painful now?"

She tried, successfully, to speak as an ordinary attendant might have spoken. The calmness of her tone, and the weakness of his state, subdued any emotion he might have endeavoured to express; only his bright eyes maintained their gaze. What did he feel? What did he think? Was there any wonder or sense of the strangeness of his position? Who could tell that? The acquiescence of dying comes to some sooner, to others later, before the quiescence of death. It had come to him.

"Is your head painful?" Mrs. Pemberton repeated.

"Not very; only confused." Then, after a pause, "What is his name?"

"My husband's name? John Pemberton."

"John Pemberton. Ah, yes—I've heard of him."

He said no more, and presently he closed his eyes and fell into a brief slumber. The two, watching him, in profound silence, consulted each other's faces. His sleep grew deeper.

"This," whispered John Pemberton, "is the change Dr. Marshall told us to look for. I will go for Mrs. Simcox."

"Do so," she said; "but I will not leave him."

As her husband was moving away, she touched him on the arm, and said:

"If he should wake, and speak again, knowing me?"

"Speak to him, dear. Try to get at his mind—I am sure only you can—and it is of the greatest importance, that we may know what to do."

He gently placed her in a chair, and left her.

The sick man slept. There was no difference in his aspect now that his eyes were closed; and the brief ray of intelligence might never have crossed his wan, drawn features. Mary watched him, patiently, with the half-incredulous feeling there always is in such watching. The nurse came and looked at him. He might sleep for hours like that, she said; but she could not say it was a good sign. He might "go off" so.

It was well on in the afternoon when the patient awoke. He was seemingly somewhat refreshed by sleep, and drank almost eagerly.

It was the nurse's hand which gave him the drink; it was Mary's which raised his head while he drank, and she gently laid it down again. He looked up towards where she stood behind him, and she moved to the side of the bed.

"Mary!" he said again.

"Yes, I am here."

"I want to speak to you—quite alone."

"Would you kindly leave me with Mr. Randall," said Mary to the nurse; then added, answering the surprise in the woman's face, "he and I are very old friends."

Mrs. Simcox obeyed, nothing loath, and as she returned to the comfortable room where she might resume her interrupted sleep, she mentally recorded her conviction that there was to be nothing but surprises about this case.

Edward Randall had again closed his eyes when Mary spoke to the nurse, and he did not reopen them until some moments after she had left the room. Then he said:

"Yes, I want to speak to you—quite alone—about her."

* * * * *

"And so you are going to England, Miss Pemberton. You are very fortunate. Of course you are delighted?"

"I am not sure. I shall be delighted, I am sure, when we get there; but at present I am more glad for papa's sake than for my own. All my old friends are here, and I am going to part with them, except Dick."

"I suppose one mustn't say of a horse that he's a lucky dog; but one may envy Dick."

"Going to England?" She spoke with charming unconsciousness. "Poor fellow, it's a great experiment, papa says. I wish we were all safely landed."

"You have a whole world of relations and friends to welcome you, I suppose?"

"No, not at all. I have never heard papa talk much of his friends—after twenty years there cannot be many to go back to. And he has only a brother-in-law, and a niece and nephew, by way of relatives. But his heart is set on returning to his own country, and my being a real Englishwoman. And I like it; I like everything my father likes. It cannot matter to me whether I am here or there, if I have my father with me."

This conversation took place between Ida and Mr. Dale during the evening of the same day. The house was silent and gloomy; its master and mistress were absorbed in the care of the stranger, and Ida had nothing to do. She was perfectly content that it should be so, and it never occurred to her that there was a greater degree of anxiety and trouble about this gentleman than seemed to be quite justified by the circumstances. She was very glad to have someone to talk to, and Mr. Dale was more agreeable than she had at first found him. She had no notion that she was being cross-questioned, or that their chance visitor was making himself acquainted with everything concerning them which he could contrive to get at.

"There's no lover in the case," thought Dale; "if there were, though she would not say anything about him to me, she would not say that about her father."

"And you, Mr. Dale," Ida added, "you are not only a bird of passage here, I suppose? You will remain in the colonies?"

This simple question did not seem very easily answered. Mr. Dale hesitated in his reply. He was not sure, he said; he supposed he ought to stay, now that he had come there, and see it out, but he had been rather disappointed, and did not see his way. Ida did not understand his meaning, which indeed was not very clear. She was sorry that he had been disappointed, but he might have experienced that sentiment with regard to the scenery, or the crops, for all she knew. The makeshifts and expedients of a desultory existence had never come within her ken.

"If you don't like it," she said, innocently, "and if you have been disappointed, I should think you had better go 'home,' as papa says. Suppose poor Mr. Randall were to get quite well, and we were all to go in the same ship? He was going back to England, wasn't he?"

"I believe so. That would be a very nice thing to suppose, Miss Pemberton; but I am afraid, like most of the nice things which I have either supposed or proposed in my life, it is much too nice to be true."

The girl looked at him with some surprise. The moody discontent in his face rather interested her; perhaps he had had trials, and perhaps they were romantic.

But Dale dismissed the troubled look, and began to ask her dexterous questions about Mrs. Pemberton—questions which Ida answered with her usual frankness. Mrs. Pemberton knew England well, and had friends there; she liked going back, but, Ida thought, more on her husband's account than on her own. Ida did not know anything particular about her stepmother's family; she believed they were ordinary respectable people, only not well off. She could not tell at all whether Randall was a name which Mrs. Pemberton had known. Why did Mr. Dale ask her? Mr. Dale did not know; he fancied—it might be only fancy—her father had told him that Randall was a former acquaintance; but he had not been very attentive, and his impression might be erroneous. Ida would ask her father, presently: it would be such a strange thing. Mr. Dale's hopes of attaining possibly useful knowledge concerning Mrs. Pemberton's past, were defeated by the girl's want of knowledge. She had never felt any curiosity about Mary before she came into the lives of her father and herself, a sweet and benignant influence. Dale had no exactly defined purpose in his mind in questioning the girl thus; he had only the knowledge that difficulty and risk to himself might arise from Mrs. Pemberton. That was the side on which he was menaced, and he bore in mind that the more you can learn of your actual or potential adversary, the better—that knowledge in such a case is essentially power.

The day closed in the monotonous dreariness which had marked its course, and it was not until the following day that Mr. Dale had an opportunity of seeing Mrs. Pemberton. He was told that she had passed the greater part of the night in the patient's room, and had slept until late next morning. But she came into the dining-room, and spoke to Mr. Dale after the doctors left the house on that day.

"Mr. Randall is sensible," she said, "but the nurse and I think there is a great change in him. He has asked for you. Will you come to him?"

Dale was alone in the room when she came in, and thus addressed him without any preliminaries. She was looking pale and tired, but quite calm.

"Of course I will; poor fellow!" replied Dale. "How wonderfully good you are to him, Mrs. Pemberton."

She waved her hand slightly, as if she put the remark aside, and passed out of the room before him.

"He seemed to remember about you suddenly," she said, "and then became distressingly anxious to see you. I was alone with him, but thought it better to come and fetch you at once."

Before he could reply, they were at the door of the sick man's room. As Dale entered, he caught Edward Randall's eyes, fixed upon him with the bright shallow eager of the dying, which revives sometimes even when the grey shadow is falling upon the rest of the face. Those eyes would have called him, without the voice, which whispered:

"Dale! I want you."

He went to the bed, and leaned over the dying man, who put up one hand and feebly touched his shoulder. He bent his head nearer, and Edward Randall whispered:

"The money is for my mother; but never let her know how I got it."

A day later, and the awful presence of death had taken possession of Mount Kiera Lodge. The still and silent form which lay there in the cheerful house, with the glorious sunlight all around its walls, was not of kin to the living inmates, but its awe was hardly the less for that. The face of the woman he had wronged, whose youth he had blighted with the curse of defeated hope and wasted love, was the last object on which his eyes had rested; and her hand closed them. It was all over now; and Mrs. Pemberton, her suddenly imposed task done, felt as if she had lived a hundred years since its beginning. Could she be the same woman, and could all around her be the same as they were on that day, so near, so far, when her husband brought her the papers about the ships into the verandah? The incident of the stranger's death in their house would have been serious and disturbing enough of itself, but how much did it not mean to her and to her husband that the man who had died there was no stranger? At all events to her it meant this, that the reluctance and doubt which she had felt about going to England were at an end. The ghost had been laid.

The funeral of Edward Randall was attended by John Pemberton, Dr. Gray, and Mr. Dale; and when it was over, there seemed to the latter to be no reasonable excuse or pretext upon which he might prolong his stay at Mount Kiera Lodge. There had been no advance in intimacy between him and his kind-hearted host, during the dreary days which had succeeded Edward Randall's death. Mr. Pemberton was tired, preoccupied, and silent. Of Mrs. Pemberton he saw nothing; she kept her room. Without the impression amounting to one of absolute distrust, Mr. Dale was conscious that John Pemberton had received a somewhat unfavourable impression when he discovered, on making the necessary inquiries and arrangements consequent on Randall's death, that Dale hardly knew anything at all about him, and that his prompt decision to remain with the poor fellow on the occasion of the accident was rather in the nature of an escapade than anything else. He had seen a good deal of Ida, and was not slow to perceive that he had conquered any little prejudice his first advances had created against him in her mind, and that the pretty daughter of the Arcadian colonist was interested and amused by his talk of places and things, of which she knew nothing. Ida had not as yet acquired even the most elementary idea of the art of flirtation—she was as simple and natural as a girl could be; but it was not much to be wondered at that the only young man who had ever been staying in the house, and who had come there under circumstances in which her imagination found material to work upon, should be singularly interesting to her, and at least have stimulated her curiosity strongly. Then, too, the days were dull, and none of their friends came to Mount Kiera Lodge, while she did not go beyond its boundaries. Had Mrs. Pemberton been Ida's mother, she would probably not have lost sight of the girl for so many hours of the sad and heavy days, and she would have been alive to the indiscretion of such unrestricted walking and talking with so absolute a stranger. But Mary was lost in her own thoughts at this time—given up to the sort of absorption which accompanies the last looking over and putting away for ever of an epoch in one's life—and she hardly thought of Ida. The business of life, which does not interrupt itself for any such trivial reason as that one dweller or sojourner in a house has done with it for ever, claimed the attention of John Pemberton, and he was at all times unobservant of the ways and the occupations of his women-kind, even when he was feeling well and bright, and had none of the heavy, sleepy, fatigued, and yet restless sensation over him which made him just then unobservant of everything except his indispensable business, and made that trying and difficult to get through. What time and thought he had to spare were for his wife. Thus it happened that Ida Pemberton and Dale were together pretty nearly all day long, and that while her father and her stepmother regarded the stranger as one their casual acquaintance with whom would naturally terminate, when the last services which their kindness and humanity could render to Edward Randall should have been concluded, Ida had raised him, in her imagination, if not in her heart, to the perilous eminence of a "great friend."

There was not in John Pemberton's manner the slightest encouragement to Dale to hope that, when he should make the inevitable reference to his departure from Mount Kiera Lodge, any further invitation to remain would be extended to him. He was not surprised at this, or uneasy. It was very natural that people who had just gone through such an uncommonly unpleasant adventure, should be anxious to have their house to themselves. He by no means proposed to lose sight of the Pembertons, and he felt pretty confident that he should find ways and means of turning the Edward Randall episode to collateral advantage: in addition to the satisfactory transfer of the dead man's property to himself: even if it should not lead to the result which his presumptuous fancy had already presented to him in the light of a possibility.

On their way back from the funeral, Mr. Dale carried out his purpose of alluding to his departure, and his expectations were exactly fulfilled. John Pemberton received the intimation with polite acquiescence; and Dale perceived that its coldness attracted the notice of Dr. Gray, who occupied a seat in the carriage. Indeed, Dr. Gray had been closely attentive to John Pemberton's words and looks since the morning when they had been about to leave the house, and now he noticed that he leaned his head back in an angle of the carriage, and looked pale and weary. The doctor was going only a portion of the way back with the other two; he found his groom waiting for him with his horse at an appointed place, and got out.

"I shall say good-bye, then," said the doctor, shaking hands with Dale, "as you are to be off in the morning. But I shall come over about twelve to see how you all are at the Lodge."

Dr. Gray mounted his horse and turned down a by-road. He shook his head once or twice as he thought, "I don't like Pemberton's looks—I don't like them a bit. I shouldn't be surprised if they were not through this business yet, by any means."

On that same night a conference was held between John Pemberton and his wife, which, if he could have attained to a knowledge of its purport, must have satisfied Mr. Dale, that his anticipations of future pleasure or profit to be derived from his acquaintance with the Pembertons were unfounded.

Once again Mary and her husband were talking beside the open window, through which came the sweet air of the summer night. But John Pemberton lay on a couch rolled into the embrasure of the window, and his wife sat on a footstool close beside him, with his hand in hers. There is hardly any light in the room, for John has complained that his eyes are weak, and he cannot bear it; and the forms and faces of the two are indistinct. Mary is speaking low and earnestly.

"I know, John, I feel all you say. It is horrible, most horrible, but it is irresistible. I could not tell you how the conviction came to me, but it did come, and it stays. There is not the smallest doubt or obscurity about what he said to me. Here is the note I made of it, the moment after he said it; you read it yourself when his portmanteau was opened:

"Three hundred sovereigns in a colour box, among the linen in my portmanteau. You will remember the box; it was once yours. Send it to my mother."

"Yes, Mary, but there was no such thing. I had his keys locked up from the time his clothes were taken off, until we opened the valise and the bag, in Dale's presence, and there was no such thing."

"The other packet was there, in the very place he told me I should find it in. What had become of the money?"

"May he not have been under a delusion? May it not have been a fever dream? Remember, there were twenty pounds in his pocket-book, and you gathered from him that he had been always unfortunate since he came out."

"That is so; but he was going to Sydney, to go to England. He could not have done that for twenty pounds, even if he had contemplated landing without a shilling. Oh no, John, believe me, he had the money, and it was in the place he said. And Mr. Dale knew he had it—I know he did, for when I brought Mr. Dale unto him, I heard some of what he said, faint though his voice was:—he said the money was to be sent to his mother! John, that man has the money; he has robbed the dead."

"Hush, Mary; indeed it cannot be!"

"Indeed, it is. Can nothing be done? Is there no pretext on which you could have his luggage searched?"

"My dear, what an idea! Of course not. The keys were in my possession from the first."

"Then it is hopeless. We can do nothing. Only the clothes and the other things can be sent to his poor mother. We will take them with us, John, and you will let me go to her, and tell the story of her son's death. You will let me do that too, as well as the thing he asked me to do."

"Of course, my love."

"But Mr. Dale has got his money, John; I am as certain of it as I am of my existence."

"I cannot possibly believe it, Mary, though I do not like him. I don't trust him, and he is hard and selfish, but still I cannot think that."

"And you are shocked that I can think it? But it is quite true, John."

She bent her head, and laid her forehead on the hand she held. John Pemberton started slightly and shivered.

"I feel absurdly nervous," he said, "and start at a touch. My bones ache too. This has been a terrible time."

She hardly heeded him; her mind was full of the conviction which she had expressed.

"That man has robbed the dead son and the living mother," she said. "It is dreadful to think of it. He was desperately anxious about that money going to his mother. Poor fellow! he was not to be permitted to make even that reparation."

Her voice was choked with a sob, and her tears fell on her husband's hand.

"Mary," said John Pemberton, with exquisite tenderness, but wearily, "don't grieve, at least, for this part of it. When you go to his mother, you shall take her three hundred pounds, and tell her, which will be true enough, that it comes from her son. And, with regard to Dale, let us say no more about him. He will be off to-morrow morning, and we shall hear or see no more of him. Don't, don't thank me, Mary! Are we not one? And don't break down over this grief, my dear; for, do you know, I feel as if I was going to want some nursing now."

* * * * *

Mr. Dale had breakfasted, and had been picked up by the morning coach, an hour before Ida came down to breakfast on the following day. Formal farewell had been exchanged between her and Mr. Dale, in her father's presence, the night before, and she had not ventured to appear at the departing guest's early breakfast, though she could not have told why. She watched his departure from the window of her room, and felt much more on the occasion than she had felt, when the funeral procession of the previous day had set out from the house. That had been a solemn occasion; this was a personal regret. Ida wished she could know what her father had said to Mr. Dale the last thing—whether it had any reference to his coming to Kiera Lodge again. It was very odd that she felt—for the first time in her life—that she could not ask her father to tell what she wanted to know. Such a simple thing, too. She left her room at the usual time, and betook herself to her piano, to resume the morning practice, which had been suspended of late. She felt strangely dreary and discontented. A piece of music lay upon the closed lid of the instrument, the last she had been studying. As she placed it on the stand, a folded note dropped out of its leaves. It was directed to Miss Pemberton, and it contained these words:

"I hoped to have seen you, to have said good-bye again. Is it to be good-bye for—always? At least, let me know when you are to sail. I am not in favour. I have offended your father and Mrs. P. somehow. Do I know, or do I guess how? But I have not offended you. Tell me that I have not; and that you will let me see you again—in one line—that is not much to ask—to the Post-office, Sydney. I can never forget these days, and Ida. G. D."

The girl read the words, blushed deeply, angrily almost; looked at the note as if she was about to tear it up, then folded it very small, and poked it in between two buttons of her morning gown, thus lodging it in a most undeserved place of safety. After which Ida attended to her piano.

MACARONIC AND PALINDROMIC VERSES.

At this season of the year, when Christmas brings cosy parties together, and kindly hostesses are planning their parlour games and festive merrymakings; when lads and lasses, young men and maidens, agree to make puzzles as a test of ingenuity, and endeavour to give a poetical, or at least versified form to their lucubrations, they are hardly aware that what is to them a mere amusement was at one time much in fashion among courtly beaux and gallants; while at other times men of considerable learning sought refuge from severer studies in similar bagatelles. We are not speaking here of puns upon names, rhythmical puns which are in some cases witty, in others highly sarcastic. There are other kinds of versified puzzles which deserve a little notice, partly for their peculiarity, partly for the celebrity of men who have engaged in them. Some, it is true, are not exactly puzzles, seeing that they do not require the reader to find out anything. For instance, many are alliterative, using words beginning with one particular letter; such as

How high his highness holds his haughty head;

or repeating the same word many times, with changes of mood, tense, person, and numbers; or Porson's lines, containing the words "cane," "decane," "canis," &c.; or that example in which the changes are rung upon the words "twist," "twister," "twisting," "untwist," "twine," "twining," &c. Some are lipograms, excluding a particular letter throughout a line or stanza. Others point playfully to the sounds which certain letters possess in two or more languages or dialects. The burr of the Northumbrian, for instance, would have a very comical effect if the letter "r" were so often repeated as in the composition from which the following half-dozen lines are taken:

Rough roll'd the roaring river's stream,
  And rapid ran the rain,
When Robert Rutter dream'd a dream
  Which rack'd his heart with pain;
He dream'd there was a raging bear
  Rush'd from the rugged rocks.

Some lines are so constructed that each word contains one more syllable than that which precedes it.

Macaronics, or macaronic verses, are queer bundles of ingenuity, requiring for their due management a knowledge of two languages, or two dialects of the same language, or a literary language and a slang, or a combination of three or four of these. The humour consists in mixing up the heterogeneous elements together in selected proportions; but there must be a sufficient knowledge of grammar and syntax to prevent the fun from degenerating into mere nonsense; there must be sense, however queer and strained, expressed in two or more languages or dialects melted into one. During how long a period such compositions have been in favour is not known; but they can be traced at least three centuries back, seeing that Theophilus Folingo published a collection of them in the early days of Queen Elizabeth, each consisting of a mosaic in Latin and Italian, often grotesque enough. In more recent times, Genthe, Sandys, and Delepierre have published extensive collections of macaronic poetry.

In the time of James the Second of Scotland, contemporaneous with Henry the Sixth of England, the Scottish sovereigns and courtiers had become rather ashamed of their Gaelic origin, and of the old court bards who were wont to be retained to celebrate it. A satire was written on the subject at a later period, in which Lowland Scotch was mixed up with Highland Gaelic in true macaronic fashion. This satire abounds in such words as "banochadec," "dynydrach," "ach mach monotir," &c.; but as the later dialect is almost as unreadable to us moderns as the original language, the point or humour would be missed by a mere reprint of the lines here. A translation of a macaronic composition, it may be remarked in passing, would be lost labour; the verses must be read as intended, or not read at all.

A curious old play is extant, bearing the name of Ignoramus, in which the hero enumerates the good things he will present to his bride Rosa. In a form somewhat like that of instructions for drawing up a marriage settlement, Latin and English words are mixed in the introductory lines; but the gay articles of attire and ornament are expressed in English words, with a macaronic addition to each of a final Latin syllable. Thus we find the odd medley:

Gownos, silkcoatos, kirtillos, et petticoatos,
Farthingales biggos, stomacheros, et periwiggos,
Pantofflos, cuffos, garteros, Spanica ruffos,
Buskos et sokkos, tiffanos et cambrici smockos.

In the inside of the cover of an old book is an injunction to warn borrowers, and all other persons, whether borrowers or not, against a disregard of the laws of meum and tuum:

Hic liber ist meus,
And that I will show;
Si aliquis capit,
I'll give him a blow.

Liber being a book, and libellum a little book, a second effusion of the same kind may be readily understood:

Si-quisquis furetur,
This little libellum;
Per Phœbum, per Jovem,
I'll kill him, I'll fell him.
In ventrem illius,
I'll stick my scapellum;
And teach him to steal
My little libellum.

A shooting-party gave rise to a macaronic affair, beginning:

Artebus atque novis audax dum sportsman I follow,
Per stubbles et turnips et tot discrimina rerum,
Dum partridge with popping terrificare minantur.

After many more lines of the same kind, the end comes thus:

Bang bellowed both barrels, heu! pronus sternitur each dog,
Et puss in the interim creeps away sub tegmina thornbush.

About half a century ago the five hundredth anniversary of the founding of Oriel College, Oxford, was held. At a festive meeting to celebrate that event, the grace-cup was accompanied by a song, written and sung by one of the fellows, the father of the genial author of Tom Brown's School Days. It was a macaronic composition in Greek, Latin, and English, highly to be relished by Oxford men, but a little too erudite to be given here. We will simply say that the song consisted of five verses, each of which ended with the refrain or chorus:

Sing, then,
All true men,
From pulpit, bar, and quorum;
Floreat Oriel
In sæcla seculorum.

A most amusing production of the kind lives in the memory of many Scots who were members of Edinburgh University thirty or forty years ago. In the middle of one particular winter, when snow was lying thickly on the ground, a group of town boys pelted the students with snowballs, in the quadrangle of the college buildings. The students retaliated, and, cold snow giving rise to hot blood, something like a tumult took place. A few of the students afterwards celebrated the episode in a pamphlet of good-humoured banter, called The University Snowdrop. The late Professor Edward

Forbes, the eminent naturalist, was at that time in the university, and took part in the mêlée. He enriched the Snowdrop with a macaronic poem of sixty-four hexameter lines, narrating the history of the great battle. We transcribe a few of these lines, in which the fun of the thing will become apparent even to those who are not familiar with Latin:

Anno incipiente happinabit snowere multum,
E gelu intensum streetas coverabit wi' slidas,
Constanterque little boys slided and pitch'd about snowballs,
Quorum not a few bunged up the eyes of studentes.
Irritate studentes chargebant policemen to take up
Little boys, sed Charlies refusabant so for to do; then,
Contemptim studentes appellarant "Pedicatores!"
Studentes indignant reverberant complimenta;
Cum multi homines, blackguards qui gentlemen vocant,
Bakers and butchers et bullies et colliers atres,
Et alii cessatores qui locus ecclesiæ frequunt,
From Church and Cowgate cum its odoriferous abyss,
Assaultant studentes stickis et umbrellibus.
"Hit 'em hard! hit 'em hard!" shoutant damnatos puppies,
"Calamitosque tories" appellant, et various vile terms
Studentes audiebant, sed devil an answer returned, &c. &c. &c.

A Liverpool butterman, named Kelly, was in the habit of advertising his provisions in very eulogistic terms; and one of the newspapers of that town, about a dozen years ago, gave a clever skit in the form of twenty-eight macaronic lines, in which the man and his wares, his shop and his dealings, were humorously sketched in a mongrel polyglot of Latin, French, and English. The comical effect of the whole may be judged from the following:

  Avec ses barnacles super nasum,
Et turndownibus collaris so natty,
Ibi recipit argentum et aurum,
Atque nova copper coina distribuit
Ad costomeri qui emunt buttyram
Suis. Tout le monde purchased
Son beurre sel et son beurre frais;
Formosæ sunt puellæ quæ milkent
Les belles vaches qui donnent du lait
Duquel buttyri Kellii formatur.
Butterus yellowus quum vendit
Octavorum pencium est très-bon marché;
Sed butterus optimus uni shillingi
Excellentissimum est.
  Oh Kellius, mi puer, tu es trumpus,
Brickus concentratus sublimatus!
Et no mistakus.

Kelly must indeed have been a "trump," and a "thorough brick," to sell good butter at eightpence a pound, and best fresh at a shilling!

We pass from macaronic verses to say a few words concerning palindromes, another variety of what may perhaps be called poetical conundrums. Many really learned men have spent a little of their leisure time on these curious crotchets, and have exhibited no small degree of ingenuity in composing them. A palindrome is a line so constructed as to read backwards and forwards the same—a general rule, however, susceptible of many variations. A single word may, in effect, be a palindrome, such as the names Ada, Eve, Anna, Hannah, Otto, Odo, Nan, Bob; and the words "eye," "nun," "pop," "pap," "pip," "pup," "minim," "madam," and the like. A palindromic line may consist of words which are themselves individually palindromic; or the words may not possess this character, although the full line is constructed in accordance with the rule. When amply developed, the palindrome may comprise more words than can be put into one line—enough, for instance, to form a couplet or triplet. The sense or meaning of the sentence or phrase may be the same, whether read backwards or forwards; or (a more difficult task to accomplish) it may be quite different. In the best extant specimens, adulation is expressed when the line is read forwards, stinging satire when read backwards.

Most of the best palindromes being in Latin, we shall only give a few examples to illustrate the mode of construction. In the following,

Sole medere, pede, ede, perede melos,

the range of letters reads backwards and forwards the same, but changes occur in the grouping into syllables and words. The same thing is observable in

Si bene te tua laus taxat, sua laute tenebis.

The comma also, it will be seen, is shifted. A very good palindrome of fourteen words has been constructed, two or more repetitions of Odo, Anna, mulum, mappam, and madidam—each in itself a palindromic word. A palindrome on the Witches' Sabbath, "We dance round by night that we may not be consumed by fire," assumes the following form:

In girum imus noctu non ut consumimur igni.

It will be seen how ingeniously the words are collected and arranged, so that the thirty-five letters shall read backwards and forwards the same.

In some forms of palindrome, the words collectively are palindromic, but not when treated letter by letter. The first word becomes the last, the last first, the second becomes the penultimate, the penultimate the second, and so on. A much-admired example of this kind is:

Sacrum pingue dabo non macrum sacrificabo, which, treated in the mode now under notice, becomes

Sacrificabo macrum non dabo pingue sacrum.

Both relate to the killing of Abel by Cain, but one is a distinct sentence from the other. Moreover, the line in each direction is what poets call a leonine verse, comprising a rhyme within the line itself—dabo and cabo. This is an inscription in the old cloister of Santa Maria Novella, at Florence.

A favourite inscription for a baptismal font is a Greek palindrome, having the English meaning, "Wash my guilt, not my face;" the letters are built up variously into words, according as they read forwards or in the reverse direction. This inscription is found on fonts in many English churches, besides a still larger number on the Continent. It is believed to have been composed by one of the early Fathers of the Church.

One of the oddest compositions of this kind is connected with a mediæval legend, narrating how a monk rode on the devil's back towards Rome. Whenever the evil one got tired, the holy man made the sign of the cross, which urged him on again; and at last the devil said:

Signa, te signa, temere me tangis et angis;
Roma tibi subito motibus ibit amor!

Each line is a palindrome; and the meaning is equivalent to "Cross, cross yourself, you plague and vex me; you will soon get near Rome."

The most wonderful achievement, perhaps, in palindromic composition, was written in ancient Greek by a modern Greek in 1802, and published at Vienna in honour of the Emperor of Russia. It contains no fewer than four hundred and fifty-five lines, every one a palindrome in itself, although the words are not palindromic when taken singly.

A few specimens only have been composed in other languages. The tongues derived from the Teutonic stock do not lend themselves readily to this mode of treatment. An attempt in English is almost hopeless. Let any readers try the achievement, and determine this point for themselves. One over-sanguine individual thought he had the materials for a palindrome in an apostrophe addressed to a pottery huckster's dying dog; but he could produce nothing better than this doggerel line:

Go, droop, stop, onward draw no pots, poor dog!

One of the most humorous examples of this mode of playing with words, although not strictly a palindrome, depends, nevertheless, on a knowledge of two (or it may be three) languages. Every word is Latin, but they have no meaning whatever when taken together as a sentence. Read out aloud, however, we detect a series of English syllables and words, sufficiently near to catch the ear, allowance being made for a few Hibernicisms, colloquialisms, or, it may be, slang. An ingenious example consists of twenty-eight lines, a few of which will serve as a taste of the whole:

Oh pateo tulis aras cale fel O,
Hebetis vivis id, an sed "Aio puer vello;"
Vittis nox certias in erebo de nota olim,
A mite grate sinimus tonitis ovem.

* * * *

Beavi ad visu civile an socia luse,
Ure Molle an huma fore ver ægre.

We need not search for a Latin sentence here, although the words are individually Latin; the search would be fruitless. If, however, we take a little liberty with the spelling, and listen to the syllables when the lines are read out aloud, we get the following:

Oh Paty O'Toole is a rascally fellow,
He beat his wife's 'ed and said, "I 'ope you are well, oh."
With his knocks, sir, she has in her body not a whole limb,
A mighty great sin I must own it is of 'im.

* * * *

Behave, I advise you, civil and social, you see,
Your Molly and you may for ever agree.

CAPTAIN NARES AND HIS COMPANIONS: WHAT ARE THEY NOW DOING?

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

As a means of forming a reasonable guess touching the present doings of our hardy men in the distant and dangerous north, we have, in imagination, shared the healthy hilarity which rewarded Captain Parry, his officers and his men, during a series of severe winters between 1819 and 1825; when the exploring ships were iced up in (almost literally) "a darkness that might be felt," and all on board would have been depressed to absolute illness had not cheerful amusements been provided. These amusements were, in the first place, theatrical performances, in which the officers were the actors; and in the second place masquerades, with the men as active and joyous in the fun as the officers.

We have briefly adverted to a manuscript newspaper maintained on board the Hecla. In order to furnish amusing occupation during the dismal winter, and to promote innocent mirth among the officers, they set on foot a weekly newspaper, to be called the North Georgian Gazette and Winter Chronicle, of which Captain Sabine undertook to be the editor, under the promise that it was to be supported by original contributions from the officers of the two ships. "Although some objection may perhaps be raised against a paper of this kind being generally resorted to in ships of war," said Parry, "I was too well acquainted with the discretion, as well as the excellent dispositions, of my officers to apprehend any unpleasant consequences from a measure of this kind. I can safely say that the weekly contributions had the happy effect of employing the leisure hours of those who furnished them, and of diverting the mind from the gloomy prospect which would sometimes obtrude itself on the stoutest heart."

Captain Sabine, who assumed the office of Mr. Editor, was not a naval man; he belonged to the scientific branch of the army, but being well versed in science, was appointed astronomer to the expedition. He lived to be General Sir Edward Sabine, President of the Royal Society.

In his capacity as editor, Sabine, inviting contributions from any and all of the officers, held himself responsible "That no article whatsoever shall be admitted which, to his knowledge, will give a moment's uneasiness to any individual. He reserves to himself, therefore, a discretionary power of omitting any contributions which may appear to him objectionable, either on that or on any other account." He further recommended, "That an anonymous signature be affixed to each communication, and the handwriting effectually disguised, to insure the most rigid impartiality in judging and selecting the articles for insertion." A box was placed on the capstan, in which contributions could at any time be dropped.

And now, what was the newspaper produced under these novel and interesting circumstances? It ran to twenty-one numbers, from November 1st, 1819, to March 20th, 1820. The contributors fully carried out the editor's suggestion in regard to assumed names; the medley was rich enough—Pluto, Comus, Frosticus, Old Comical, Albert, Plain Matter-of-Fact Man, Philosophicus, Philo Somnus, Peter Trial, Trim, Richard Roam-about, Peter Fume, Scepticus, Timothy Quill-Splitter, Little-Brain Lack-Wit, Pincher, Sir Pitiful Punster, Peeping Tom, Abigail Handicraft, Castigator, Amicus, Slender Brain, Smell Rat Smoke 'em, Peter Plainway, Meredith Makeshift, Hilary Highflier, Nathan Longbow, Henry Harmless, and others equally characteristic.

The newspaper was made a sort of theatrical reporter, in so far as it noticed the performances of the past week or two, announced those that were forthcoming, and gave encomiums where Mr. Editor thought he might consistently do so. The bulk of the contributed articles were, of course, humorous. If a writer were suspected of having cribbed his composition from some printed book, he was good-humouredly quizzed, and advised to behave better in future. Some of the writers began to ask questions and submit problems relating to nautical astronomy, and such like matters; but the editor hinted that the scientific and technical books on board pretty well filled up this department; he wanted amusement rather than useful knowledge for his pages; and his colleagues fully entered into the spirit of his views. Who wrote the several articles was not known, however much it may have been surmised; but it was certain that most of the officers lent a hand.

The advertisements were the best contributions. The humour contained in many of them was the more acceptable, because it generally bore upon some of the incidents and circumstances of the ship or the crew. It will not, perhaps, be unwelcome to present a selection from the budget.

The officers engaged in the theatrical doings had good reason to appreciate the following:

"Wanted, a middle-aged woman, not above thirty, of good character, to assist in dressing the ladies of the theatre. Her salary will be handsome, and she will be allowed tea and small beer into the bargain. None need apply but such as are perfectly acquainted with the business, and can produce undeniable references."

It would not surprise us if the following came from the pen of Mr. Editor:

"Wanted, a few bales of ready wit, done up in small parcels, for the Winter Chronicle. This article being scarce in the market, a good price may be depended on."

There was an Observatory set up on shore for the occasional use of the scientific men; it is alluded to in some of the advertisements:

"For sale by auction, at the Observatory, on the coldest day in January next, a quantity of nankeen, the property of a gentleman who expected to get into the Pacific in September last. Flannels and furs will gladly be taken in part payment."

It was pretty nearly the fact that some of the officers really believed in the probability of the expedition solving the north-west problem in one single season, by reaching to Behring's Strait and thence to the Pacific. The following evidently came from a member of the Hecla troupe:

"Wanted, for the use of the performers, a considerable quantity of assurance; also a quantity of sound retentive memory, at per yard. Any gentleman possessing a superabundance of these requisites will be treated with on liberal terms."

And from a similar quarter proceeded:

"An amateur is desirous of procuring a good voice, with instructions for its management."

The theatre also suggested the following, as it did many other advertisements:

"Left behind the scenes, on Wednesday evening, a box, containing a present of comfits, two bottles of lavender-water, a small packet of rouge, some white powder, five artificial teeth, one pair of eyebrows, three large moustaches, with whiskers to correspond, sixteen papers of court plaster, a silver thimble, a pair of ladies' garters, seven gold rings with various stones (one bearing the device of two hearts transfixed with an arrow), three smelling bottles, a pincushion, a pair of curling irons, several bottles of rose-water; with a number of smaller articles, including a recipe for promoting the growth of a beard."

The officers could hardly fail to penetrate the incognito of the writer who advertised:

"An amateur, who has generally female characters assigned to him, is desirous of receiving a few hints on the most becoming attitudes, action, and articulation for a woman of fashion; also on the most approved method of obtaining the fashionable stoop, without appearing round-shouldered."

This fashionable stoop we can learn something about by glancing at the sketches by Cruikshank and other humorists under date 1819.

A law report was briefly given in one of the numbers, relating to a case that came on in the Court of Common Sense. In the cause Editor v. Non-Contributors, Councillor Puzzlewell, for the defence, put in an affidavit from some of the defendants. David Slowboy excused himself for failing to contribute to the North Georgian Gazette on the ground of want of leisure; Gregory Gripes put in a medical certificate to the effect that he had been suffering from certain internal aches; while another defaulter declared that some half-written papers had been cribbed from him.

A very good bit of humorous astronomy was given in the number following February 7th, on which day the sun first appeared after the prolonged night of many weeks' duration: "Fashionable Arrival.—On Thursday last, about noon, after an absence of three months, arrived at his seat, Snow-hill, in the Isle of White, the Earl of Sol, Viscount Caloric, well known as one of those distinguished luminaries which seem born to enlighten and adorn the world. His lordship has been on his travels in the south during the winter. . . . . . It is said that the noble earl's protracted absence has been severely felt in this neighbourhood, and that it has even produced a considerable degree of coldness between him and his tenants in this country; but as it is well known that his lordship possesses the peculiar faculty of imparting his own warmth of heart and melting disposition to all who are fortunate enough to be placed within the sphere of his great influence, little doubt can be entertained of a speedy reconciliation."

Such are a few specimens culled from this unique cluster of newspapers. To criticise them closely would be a mistake; they were intended for a very limited circle of readers, under special circumstances; and that they fully answered the intended purpose we know on the testimony of those who had the best means of judging. Captain Parry said in his "Journal," "The North Georgian Gazette, which I have already mentioned, was a source of great amusement, not only to the contributors, but to those who, from diffidence of their own talents, or other reasons, could not be prevailed on to add their mite to the little stock of literary compositions which was weekly demanded; for those who declined to write were not unwilling to read, and more ready to criticise than those who wielded the pen. The subjects handled in the paper were, of course, various, but generally applicable to our own situation."

When the expedition returned to England, a strong wish was expressed by the relations and friends of the officers to see this curious little newspaper in some more permanent form than that of a series of written sheets. Parry briefly mentioned the matter thus: "The officers who were chiefly concerned in carrying it on have agreed to print it, for the entertainment of their friends; the publisher to be at liberty, after supplying each with a certain number of copies, to dispose of the rest." John Murray published it, in a neat thin quarto; and whoever possesses a copy of this volume, has a curiosity worth keeping.

Fifty-six years after Parry's first enterprise, as we have said, Captain Nares has gone out to the bleak north. Just about midway in this period came the expedition of Captain Austin, large in its organisation, and celebrated for its sledging achievements. We will devote a little notice to it (as a specimen of many) in order to show that Parry's example, in all that concerned the maintenance of cheerfulness and good health and spirits, produced admirable results.

In 1850, Captain Austin set forth in the Resolute, supported by Ommanney in the Assistance, Osborn in the Pioneer, and Cater in the Intrepid. On the 24th of September they were iced in near Griffith's Island, and so remained during an unusually protracted winter. All the arrangements for wintering were made as effective as possible; and those relating to amusements were assuredly not forgotten.

First, the theatre. Ample stores having been provided by the Government, a theatre was tastefully fitted up on board the Assistance, and a corps of actors formed, under the management of Captain Ommanney. The scenery, painted by some of the officers, seems to have been of a really meritorious character; and one of the officers tastefully and correctly carved in snow two life-size figures of the Princess Royal and the Prince of Wales (at that time children). Not a little proud were the officers to see these two snowy statues placed in niches on either side of the drop curtain. The theatre was kept at a temperature (only a few degrees below the freezing-point!) so comfortable, as quite to eclipse anything that Parry had been able to command. Printers (of whom we shall speak presently) got up dashing coloured playbills in thoroughly sensational style. Thus, a pink playbill for one of the evenings announces—The Turned Head, Bombastes Furioso, and the splendid new pantomime of Zero; in Bombastes, "the only lady in the provinces has been engaged at an enormous sacrifice, it being her first appearance on any stage;" while in Zero, "the celebrated clowns will introduce some of their favourite airs." The bill for "The last night of the season of the Royal Arctic Theatre" gave the cast of Charles the Second, with Mecham as the King, Ommanney as Major Vanberg, and Markham (at this present time one of the colleagues of Nares) as Gustave de Mervell; after which, an exhibition of "grand phantasmagoric magical figures;" to conclude with "the new Grand Pantomime of Zero, repeated by special desire, and produced with unusual magnificence."

The masquerades were especially in favour, the men being invited to join the officers in keeping up the gambols. On board the Resolute and the Intrepid ingenious arrangements were made for this purpose; and the decorations of the "saloons" were due to the same officers as the scenery of the theatre. In November was put forth a flaming announcement to the effect that, "The first grand bal masqué for the season will be held, on board H.M.S. Resolute, during the month of December next, when a fashionable and crowded audience, en costume, is fully anticipated." Whether fashionable or not, it was unquestionably varied and picturesque: Punch, Sir Greasyhide Walrus, vivandières, a Queen of the Iceni, sweeps, grand Turks, devils, ghosts, nondescripts, clowns, pirates, smugglers, niggers, a gigantic animated bottle of Warren's blacking—all were there. As Jack Tar is a handy fellow at contrivances, it was not found difficult to vary the characters and dresses on the successive nights of this joyous masquerading. In the Intrepid saloon were occasionally held soirées, diversified by tableaux vivants, recitations, songs, and so forth; and a similar "reception" was one evening held by Captain Austin in the Resolute.

A newspaper was an especial delight, because (in addition to the officers) such of the crew as felt bold enough to try their skill were invited to contribute to it; and, although the articles were anonymous, the editor had the means of knowing that some of them, exhibiting both good sense and a fund of humour, were from the pens of men who ranked no higher than able seamen. Once a month this newspaper (the Aurora Borealis) appeared in manuscript, the articles being transferred to it by the editor's own hand. Almost every contribution bore some relation to the condition of the ships' companies in the desolate dark north. Sometimes a pseudo-scientific problem appeared, such as, "What are the effects of the sun's absence—whether it acts as an extinguisher, or merely as a wet blanket?" and "Whether the most ardent flame could survive in this desperately romantic region?" An advertisement announced, "Wanted, by an executive officer, when the thermometer is below zero, a berth between decks; to attend the gun-room fire would be preferred. No objection to take part in port-wine mulls." And another, "Wanted, for the approaching bal masqué, a partner who can dance the polka, mazourka, Cracovienne, bolero, fandango, waltz, galop, sailor's hornpipe, and Irish jig. She must also possess a ready flow of wit and repartee." After the return of the expedition to England, most of the contents of the newspaper were printed in an octavo volume of three hundred and fifty pages, under the title of the Arctic Miscellany, illustrated by several woodcuts from sketches made by the officers, some of them replete with humour. An occasional Arctic Illustrated News contained some of these original sketches, accompanying manuscript articles.

Austin and his companions found printing to be a source of great delight. A small printing-press, with ink and type, had been furnished by the Admiralty, for the purpose of printing "balloon papers"—small slips containing a few words relating to the position of the ships on a particular date, &c. Bundles of these slips, fastened to small balloons, were sent off in the air, to take their chance of falling into the hands of civilised men belonging to any nation. There were no printers in the squadron; but some of the officers soon learned the art; and, by degrees, playbills, announcements of masquerades, broadsheets, and ballad songs, issued from the Arctic press. Several of the crew, also, became expert in the art, and set up in type songs and trifles of their own composition. Paper became exhausted by this unexpected demand; and then the printing was done on handkerchiefs, shirts, chamois leather, and anything else that could be made available. One of the playbills, printed on leather, is preserved in the British Museum.

Nares and Markham, and scores of other gallant fellows—are they following, and perhaps improving upon, these excellent modes of driving dull care away? We confidently believe they are. Whether iced up in Smith Sound, Kennedy Channel, Hall Basin, or Lincoln Sea, whether as far as 82° or even 85° N. latitude—iced up they certainly are. The ships are, in all probability, roofed in, and every precaution taken to maintain the health and cheerfulness of all on board during a long spell of dark, dismal, inclement winter. Intellectual improvement and social amusement, we may be certain, have not been forgotten. The Admiralty has well supplied the expedition, not only with books and educational appliances, but with the wherewithal for theatrical and other amusements. The medical efficacy of a good hearty laugh is now well understood. Who knows? Perhaps it may even save a little money out of the Navy Estimates; seeing that a cheerful, healthy seaman is much more profitable in the end than one who is both out of health and out of spirits. We believe we are not far wrong in saying that Captain Nares himself proved to be an excellent amateur actor twenty years or so ago, when an assistant officer under Captain Kellett in the Arctic Seas; and that he then and there enacted Lady Clara in the drama of Charles the Second.

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

WILLIAM DAMPIER.

More akin to the free companion than to the conjuror, yet partaking at times of the learning of the latter; enjoying the pursuit and capture of booty as well as the heartiest brigand, but yet at the same time increasing his own knowledge and expanding the realms of geography; the adventurer who, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sailed from Plymouth or Bideford had a veritable individuality of his own. He was a gentleman of Devon with some fancy for trading with the natives of those far Western Indies, given by the Pope of Rome to Jack Spaniard for ever; but with a huge desire to make the "jacket" of the said Spaniard to "smoke," and eke to "singe the King of Spain's beard" should occasion offer. To do him justice, the gentleman adventurer made very few pretences of trading. His ship was as "tall" as his purse could supply, and she carried as heavy metal as the ordnance-makers of the time could construct. Hawkins, Oxenham, Drake, and Cavendish are, perhaps, the finest examples of the true gentleman adventurer, for they were, although mainly, yet not entirely, moved to adventure by the desire of plunder. They were greedy for the Unknown. To us who live in the ripe manhood—perhaps, alas! in the dotage—of the world, it is difficult to realise the intense yearning of the vigorous men of action of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the Undiscovered. With the exception of the regions immediately surrounding the Poles and part of Central Africa, we of this nineteenth century know the configuration of our globe very well. Polar or African exploration is now the only outlet for adventurous spirits, and it must be confessed that neither the frozen regions of the North, the raging seas of the Antarctic, nor the fertile interior of Africa, offer attraction like that exercised by the Indies, the wondrous realm of Cathay, and the empire of Chipangu, upon our daring ancestors. Fabulous stories of the wealth of these remote regions gradually filtered through Spain and Portugal to England, and the voyage of Magellan's fleet round the world excited Englishmen to be up and doing also. The charm of novelty was added to the chance of wealth. During the lifetime of Columbus, and for years after his death, the continuity of the continent of America remained unproved, and nothing can be more clear than that the voyages of Vespucius, Magellan, and the Cabots were designed to find, not America, but the passage to India through what was imagined to be a vast archipelago. Bit by bit it was discovered that the great mountain backbone extended northward and southward to the regions of perpetual frost and storm, and that the gap in the Isthmus of Darien, depicted on the curious globe in the library at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, had no existence save in the imagination of early cartographers. The great South Sea was, to Englishmen, an unknown ocean, long after its discovery by Nunez de Balboa and its navigation by Magellan, but when first seen by Francis Drake from that "goodly and great high tree" on the isthmus, had long been furrowed by Spanish keels. How, from the day of the treacherous attack on Sir John Hawkins's fleet in the harbour of San Juan de Ulloa, there was "no peace beyond the line;" how Spaniard as well as Englishman risked his life and property doubly when he sailed in tropical waters; how the English sacked cities, intercepted gold trains, and captured galleons; how, when caught by their foes, they were either condemned to the galleys or handed over to the Holy Inquisition; how Captain Drake sailed round the world in the Golden Hind, picking up by the way the good ship Cacafuego, with twenty-six tons of silver, besides gold and jewels, the whole valued at three hundred and sixty thousand "pesos;" and how Queen Elizabeth was entertained at dinner on board the Golden Hind, then lying at Deptford; how Captain Cavendish entered the harbour of Plymouth with silken sails; and how the naval power of Spain was brought to naught in the great Channel fight, are matters of history; but the story of the successors of Drake and Cavendish — the buccaneers — is by no means so clearly made out. The generally accepted story sets down the buccaneers as originally herdsmen, driven by oppression first to defence, next to reprisals, and lastly to a generally lawless life. This derivation of the whole army of buccaneers and filibusters from the cattle-slaying settlers of Hispaniola, and the Tortugas, has always appeared to the writer somewhat fanciful. Doubtless, discontented herdsmen from time to time joined bands of sea-rovers and gave them the name derived from their calling, but the whole practice of buccaneering was but an extension of the maxim, "No peace beyond the line."

Among, but hardly of, this desperate crew was a remarkable Englishman, made, minus the good fortune, of similar stuff to the old English navigators, who harried the Spaniard without making robbery a profession. William Dampier was a Somersetshire man, born about the middle of the seventeenth century. His friends did not originally design him for the sea, "but, upon the death of my father and mother, they, who had the disposal of me, took other measures, and, having removed me from the Latin School, to learn writing and arithmetic, they soon after placed me with a master of a ship at Weymouth, complying with the inclinations I had very early of seeing the world." These inclinations were afterwards gratified without being satisfied, for Dampier was a true explorer, ever eager and anxious to map out an unknown bit of coast, or to describe a new race of men, a new bird, beast, or fish; and disappointment had no power to destroy this thirst for knowledge. Among pirates and cut-throats always more or less drunk, and generally in a state of mutiny, in fair weather and foul, through storm or shine, he kept that journal which no one can read without conceiving a hearty admiration for the much-enduring man, who, in accuracy of delineation, has been exceeded by no subsequent traveller. His first voyages were to France and to Newfoundland; then came a long and warm voyage to Bantam, on board of the John and Martha, of London, Dampier serving before the mast. After a little rest on shore Dampier enlisted on board the Royal Prince, England being then at war with Holland, and having fought in two engagements under Sir Edward Sprague, he returned home, invalided, to his brother's house in Somersetshire. With renewed health came the desire for adventure, and Dampier went to Jamaica as under-manager of a plantation belonging to Colonel Hellier. As a planter, he was, as he confesses, "clearly out of his element," and having made several coasting voyages round about Jamaica, shipped himself aboard one Captain Hudsel, bound to the Bay of Campeachy to load logwood. Here he first mentions the buccaneers; but in this case, and indeed always, gives them the name of "privateers," as sounding better than pirates or buccaneers, and complains greatly of the inconvenience of going between the Isle of Pines, a favourite haunt of these gentry, and Cuba, on account of a Spanish garrison at Cape Corientes, who have "a large periago fitted with oars and sails ready to launch out and seize any small vessel."

During the same year (1675) our adventurer determined to spend some time at the logwood trade, by which must be understood cutting logwood in the Bay of Campeachy. Logwood - cutting had been discovered to be far more lucrative than hunting wild cattle on Beef Island. The animals had become scarce, and the labour of pegging down hides was much objected to; but there were yet many adventurers unencumbered by prejudices, who divided their time between hunting and wood-cutting, varying the monotony of life with an occasional privateering cruise. At the time of Dampier's sojourn the logwood - cutters were nearly all men who had been "privateers," but, finding their occupation restricted by the peace between this country and Spain, were "put to shifts," having prodigally spent whatever they had got by plundering the Spaniards. Cutting wood was terribly dry work, so these worthies now and then went up the country on a slave-hunting expedition, plundering the nearest Indian towns, bringing away the Indian women to serve them at their huts, and sending their husbands to be sold at Jamaica. Besides this amusement they had their grand drinking bouts, and would "spend thirty or forty pounds at a sitting aboard the ships that came hither from Jamaica; carousing and firing off guns for three or four days together." These jovial colonists went on in this fashion for a few years; but not long after Dampier's departure were captured by degrees by the Spaniards and sold as slaves in Mexico, where, he adds—with commendable fairness—they were not sent to the mines or barbarously used, as was believed by people at home in England, but were treated altogether far better than they deserved. Logwood-cutting being stopped for a while by a tempest, the effect of evil communications was made manifest in the young Somersetshire man. "When the violent storm took us I was but just settling to Work, and not having a Stock of Wood to purchase such Provision as was sent from Jamaica, as the old Standards had, I, with many more in my circumstances, was forced to range about to seek a subsistence in Company of some Privateers then in the Bay." His first venture in the piratical business was but a foretaste of the luck which followed him throughout. With two barks, containing each thirty men, they attacked Alvarado, had ten or a dozen men killed or desperately wounded, and took the fort, but found no booty. After an unsuccessful cruise, Dampier returned to work at logwood-cutting, and having apparently fared better at that trade, sailed for England in 1678, and during his spell ashore married a wife out of the Duchess of Grafton's family. His old restlessness, however, overtook him, and in the beginning of the following year he set out again, leaving his wife at Arlington House, "for Jamaica, in order to have gone thence to Campeachy; but it proved to be a Voyage round the World." In April, 1679, he arrived at Port Royal with a stock of goods which he had brought with him, and sold his cargo with the intention of buying such things as would sell among the Campeachy logwood-cutters; but, "upon some maturer considerations of my intended voyage to Campeachy, I changed my thoughts of that design, and continued at Jamaica all that year in expectation of some other business." What that "other business" was does not transpire, but it was, doubtless, profitable, as during his stay in Jamaica Dampier purchased a small estate in Dorsetshire, and forwarded the "Writing of my new purchase" to England. About Christmas, 1679, one Mr. Hobby invited him to go on "a short trading voyage to the country of the Moskitos." Coming to an anchor in Negril Bay, at the west end of Jamaica, they found there Captains Coxon, Sawkings, Sharp, and other privateers, when "Mr. Hobby's men all left him to go with them upon an expedition they had contrived, leaving not one with him beside myself, and being thus left alone, after three or four days' stay with Mr. Hobby I was the more easily persuaded to go with them too." "The expedition" these gentle "privateers" had contrived was simply a repetition of Morgan's exploit. Having captured and sacked Porto Bello by way of getting their hands in, they landed on the isthmus to the number of between three or four hundred men on the 5th April, 1680. In nine days' march they arrived at Santa Maria and took it, and after a stay of three days embarked on the Pacific coast in "such canoes and periagos" as their Indian friends could furnish.

Panama, however, rebuilt in the nine years which had elapsed since its destruction by Morgan, proved too hard a nut for them to crack. Their bravest commander, Sawkings, having been killed in a vain attempt upon Puebla Nueva, they chose first, Captain Sharp, and then Captain Coxon, as commanders, and bent their course southward to the island of Juan Fernandez. Here they remained till the 12th January, when they were scared by the appearance of three vessels, which they imagined to be Spanish ships of war in quest of them. They put to sea in haste, leaving, by accident, one of their Mosquito Indians, named William, upon the island. Losing another commander in an unsuccessful attack upon Arica, the buccaneers fell out among themselves—one party wishing to pursue their adventures in the South Sea, and the minority wishing to return across the isthmus. Captain Sharp's party cruised in the South Sea, and the following year returned to England, where Sharp and several of his men were tried for piracy, but escaped. The venture of the minority, of whom Dampier was one, was remarkable for its boldness. Forty-four white men and two Mosquito Indians embarked in a long boat and some canoes, actually undertook to make a long march through hostile territory, and again take their chance of seizing upon craft. After a fortnight's navigation, they landed at the mouth of a river in the bay of St. Michael, evaded the vigilance of the Spaniards, who were on the watch for them, and, in spite of the drenching tropical rain, pushed boldly across the isthmus. "In thunder, lightning, and in rain," drenched night and day, sleeping under trees and fording torrents, the determined band pushed on, till, on the twenty-third day of the march, they obtained Indian canoes, in which they proceeded to La Sounds Key, one of the Samballas Islands, much frequented by buccaneers, and entered a French privateer, commanded by Captain Tristian. Sailing to Springer's Key, they found eight more sail of "privateers"—to wit, Captain Coxon and three English, one Dutch, and three French. The idea of joining forces and sacking Panama for the second time still reigned in the buccaneering brain. Little, however, was done, the old feud between French and English preventing any hearty co-operation between them. Dampier, himself, who was singularly free from prejudice, openly expresses his contempt for French commanders and French seamanship, and insisted on quitting a French ship to serve under Captain Wright. Much hunting, fishing, and harpooning of manatee and turtle was done, but little or no real business, on account of a Spanish fleet which was cruising about, looking for the buccaneers. They picked up a prize or two of small value, but failed to organise any important enterprise, until one Mr. John Cook dexterously swindled the Captain Tristian before mentioned out of his ship, and made for Virginia, where Dampier now was, taking two prizes by the way. Goods and prizes were sold, except the largest ship, which was renamed the Revenge, and equipped for a long voyage. Her crew was composed of seventy men, among whom were almost all the travellers across the isthmus, including William Dampier, Lionel Wafer, Ambrose Cowley, and the commander, John Cook. Before embarking, the whole company subscribed certain rules for the maintenance of good order and sobriety during this piratical expedition. On the 23rd August, 1683, they sailed from the Chesapeake, capturing a Dutch prize, and, avoiding the West Indies for obvious reasons, made for the

Cape de Verd Isles, with the intention of steering for the Straits of Magellan, but being compelled by adverse weather to make the Guinea coast, they then, by a clever manœuvre, made a valuable prize. While preparing to anchor in the mouth of the river Sherboro', they became aware of a large Danish ship, and immediately sent their hands below, leaving no more on deck than were necessary to manage the sails. The Danish ship thus remained unaware of the real character of the Revenge, and allowed her to approach very near. When close, Captain Cook ordered the helm to be put one way, having an understanding with the helmsman to reverse his orders. The Revenge, as if by accident, suddenly fell on board the Dane, and the pirates captured her with a loss of only five men, though a ship of double their entire force, carrying thirty-six guns. The captors rejoiced greatly over their new ship, entered in and dwelt there, and having first sent their prisoners on shore, burnt the Revenge, that "she might tell no tales." In the Bachelor's Delight, for so the new vessel was named, our adventurers steered for the Straits of Magellan, but were compelled by westerly winds to double Cape Horn, and, entering the South Seas, plumped upon the Nicholas, of London, Captain Eaton commanding, fitted out as a trader, but in reality a pirate, like the Bachelor's Delight. The congenial spirits waxed merry together and sailed in company to Juan Fernandez. The reader will recollect that, when the buccaneers escaped from Juan Fernandez three years before, they left a Mosquito Indian behind them in the hurry of departure. On reading Dampier's account of Juan Fernandez and of the man who was left there for three long years, it is difficult to doubt its being the source whence Defoe derived Robinson Crusoe. The edition of Dampier before me is of 1698, a date which strengthens the belief that William, the Mosquito man, was the original Crusoe. Defoe, of course, shifted the position of his island from the Pacific to the Atlantic, somewhere off the mouth of the Orinoco, but the description of the configuration of the island and its inhabitants, the goats, points distinctly to Dampier's narrative as the material of that wonderful story in which children of every age delight. Buccaneers had good memories for their companions, and prepared to look out for William, the lost Mosquito man; but he was more vigilant yet. "He saw our Ship the day before we came to an Anchor, and did believe we were English; and, therefore, kill'd three goats in the morning before we came to an anchor, and drest them with Cabbage (from the cabbage-tree) to treat us when we came ashore. He then came to the Sea Side to congratulate our safe arrival. And when we landed, a Moskito Indian, named Robin, first leapt ashore, and running to his brother Mosquito man, threw himself flat on his face at his feet, who, helping him up and embracing him, fell flat with his face on the ground at Robin's feet, and was by him taken up also. We stood with pleasure to behold the surprise, and tenderness, and solemnity of this interview, which was exceedingly affectionate on both sides. This William had lived alone on the island for above three years, although he was several times sought after by the Spaniards, who knew he was left on the island, yet could never find him. When left behind by Captain Watling he had with him his gun and a knife, a small horn of powder, and a few shot, which being spent he contrived a way, by notching his Knife, to saw the barrel of his Gun into small pieces, wherewith he made Harpoons, Lances, Hooks, and a Long Knife; heating the pieces first in the fire, which he struck with his Gun-flint and a piece of the barrel of his Gun which he hardened; having learnt to do that among the English. The hot pieces of Iron he would hammer out and bend as he pleased with Stones, and saw them with his jagged Knife, or grind them to an edge by long labour, and harden them to a good temper as there was occasion."

Between Juan Fernandez and the Isle of Lobos de la Mar the adventurers made a prize, but missed another containing eight hundred thousand pieces of eight. Abandoning a design against Truxillo, they sailed to the Galapagos Islands, famous for pirates and turtle; they also touched at Cocos Island, believed to this day to contain hidden treasures, but Dampier's party, and Captains Swan and Eaton, encountered nothing but hardships. Dampier, disgusted at the want of success, and probably at the want of ability on the part of the pirate commanders, made a bold and striking suggestion. This was to take a thousand negroes, whom they had captured in their prizes, to go to St. Martha, and work the gold mines there. This plan he believed would attract comrades from all parts of the West Indies, and, united, they would have been a match for all the force Peru could muster. Dampier's plan was not listened to, and the confederates shortly began to show signs of parting company, as they found that they could afford to reduce their force, shortly to be increased by what may almost be called a piratical migration. The privateers had, in serious truth, exhausted the Atlantic side, and were crossing the isthmus in parties, several hundred strong, to make their fortunes in the South Seas. The object which had gathered together so many choice spirits was the Lima fleet of plate ships, to capture which a force was collected of a thousand men, in ten ships. The enterprise failed completely, and the company broke up in mutual disgust, Dampier following the fortunes of Captain Swan in the Cygnet, in the hope of picking up the Manilla galleon. Disappointment still clung to the skirts of the rovers, who found the Spaniards everywhere forewarned and forearmed, till the hardened sinners at last abandoned the American coast altogether, and ran straight for Mindanao, one of the Philippines. Entering into friendly relations with the reigning sultan, they remained for a considerable time on the island, of which and its inhabitants, their manners and customs, Dampier has left a minute account. The people were at first mightily taken with the buccaneers, but after a few months began to appreciate them at their proper value, and to treat them accordingly. Sixteen of the crew were swept off by poison in one batch, and deaths from the same cause followed with appalling rapidity. The crew were anxious to start; Captain Swan, who was in high favour with the rajah, desirous to remain. Ultimately the ship sailed without him, but the conduct of the company became at last unbearable to Dampier, who left them, and, making his way to Acheen, came home to England round the Cape of Good Hope, "and luffed in for the Downs, where we anchored, Sept. 16, 1691." What Dampier achieved during the next eight years, beyond the publication of his journal, is not accurately known. We find him again, in 1699, entrusted with an expedition of discovery sent by the Government to the coast of New Holland. Among the islands of the Indian Archipelago, and on the coasts of New Guinea and New Holland, Dampier made many discoveries, and described those new lands and peoples with great accuracy; but his usual luck did not desert him. On his return voyage his crazy old ship, the Roebuck, went down off the island of Ascension, where his ship's company lay encamped for five weeks, before they were taken off by some English ships of war. His superiors at the Admiralty—and, for that matter, the public—insisted on thinking his voyage a failure, and no more is heard of Captain Dampier as an officer of the Crown. Not long after his return, King William the Third died, and his death was followed by the War of Succession. There was now again an opportunity for Dampier to try his hand at the old game, and he obtained the command of two privateers, the St. George and Cinque Ports, equipped by a company of English merchants, and intended to cruise against the Spaniards in the South Seas. Here he at last found the long-dreamed-of Manilla galleon; but when he caught her she turned out a veritable Tartar, and the heart-broken buccaneer saw his visions of wealth disappear in the smoke of her tremendous broadside, which compelled him to sheer off at once. Crossing the Pacific he got into trouble in India, where, having no commission to show, he was thrown into prison by the Dutch. Ultimately he reached home, so poor and friendless as to be obliged, with all his nautical skill, to engage, in 1708, to act as pilot under Captains Woodes Rogers and Cook, in the Duke and Duchess, two privateers fitted out by Bristol merchants. Woodes Rogers on this voyage brought off Alexander Selkirk, or Robinson Crusoe No. 2, who had been abandoned on Juan Fernandez four years before by Captain Stradling, the troublesome colleague of Dampier, in his disastrous voyage. The new venture was a splendid success, the ships sailing into the Thames in 1711 with booty in money and merchandise valued at a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Dampier's luck, however, prevented the prize money from being divided for eight years, so that even this tardy success probably did him, individually, very little good, for not long afterwards he disappears from mortal ken. Whether, embarking on fresh enterprises, he, old and weather-worn, was at last devoured by that ocean he loved with such enduring affection, or whether he, incomparably the greatest navigator of his time, sank into a sort of Ancient Mariner, given to tobacco and rum, and finally dropped into a nameless tomb in an obscure churchyard, no record tells us. No pen has chronicled the latter days of the daring mariner; no record exists of his death; no stone marks the buccaneer's grave. From his return in 1711 he vanishes completely.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LII.

MRS. ERRINGTON was greatly astonished to hear of Algernon's sudden departure from Whitford. The news came to her through Mrs. Thimbleby, who had learned it from the baker, who had been told by the barman at the "Blue Bell," that young Mr. Errington had gone off to London by the night mail on Monday. At first Mrs. Errington was incredulous. But Mrs. Thimbleby's information was so circumstantial, that at length her lodger resolved to go to Ivy Lodge, and ascertain the truth. She found Castalia in a very gloomy humour. Yes; Ancram was gone, she said. Why? Well, he said he went because Lord Seely was ill. And, beyond that, it was not possible to draw much information out of her.

Mrs. Errington, however, returned not altogether ill-pleased to her lodgings, and assumed an air of majestic melancholy. She desired Mrs. Thimbleby to prepare a cup of chocolate for her, and to bring it forthwith to the sitting-room. And when it appeared she began to sip it languidly, and to hold forth and to enjoy herself.

"Oh, my dear good soul," she said, half closing her eyes and slowly shaking her head, "I've had a great shock—a great shock."

"Deary me, ma'am!" cried simple Mrs. Thimbleby, with ready sympathy. "Nothing wrong with Mr. Algernon, I hope?"

"No, thank heaven! Not that; but perhaps the next greatest trial that could befall me, in the illness of a dear relative."

"Young Mrs. ——" Mrs. Thimbleby checked herself, having been reproved for using that distinctive epithet of "young" to Algernon's wife, and substituted the form of words her lodger had taught her. "The Honourable Mrs. Errington ain't ill, ma'am, is she?"

"No, my good creature. We had a despatch last evening announcing the illness of Lord Seely. It was sent to Algy, because dear Lady Seely was so fearful of startling me. And, for the same reason, dear Algy went off without telling me a word about it."

Mrs. Thimbleby had only the haziest notion as to what kinship existed between Mrs. Errington and the nobleman in question. She knew that her lodger was nearly connected with high folks; but she had often been troubled by doubts and misgivings, as to how far this fact might militate against her lodger's spiritual welfare, as being apt to promote worldliness and vain-glory. But Mrs. Thimbleby was full of abounding charity, and she was always ready to attribute what appeared to her evil to her own "poor head," rather than to other people's poor heart. So she merely expressed a hope that "the poor gentleman would soon get over it."

"I trust so, Mrs. Thimbleby. His removal would be a terrible loss to this country. From the sovereign downwards, we should all feel it."

"Should we, ma'am?"

"Not, of course, as acutely as the family would feel it. That could not be, of course! But I trust he will recover. I wish I could have accompanied Algy to town, to take some of the care off the shoulders of my poor darling cousin, Belinda. Belinda is Lady Seely's Christian-name, my good Thimbleby. But of course that was impossible. I have not strength for it."

"No, for sure, ma'am; but them high gentlefolks like them—lords, I mean, will be sure to have nurse-tenders, and doctors, and servants, as many as they need!"

"Oh, as to that——! The king's own physician twice daily!"

"I hope," said Mrs. Thimbleby, timidly, before leaving the room, "that the Lord will soften your daughter-in-law's heart to you in this trouble."

It must be understood that Mrs. Errington had of late, and especially since Castalia's outburst against Rhoda Maxfield, spoken of her daughter-in-law with a good deal of disapprobation; pitying her son for all he had to endure, and lamenting that he should have thrown himself away as he had done, when so many brilliant matches were, as it might be said, at his feet. "The dear Seelys," she would say, "considered that he was making a sacrifice. But she displayed so undisguised an attachment—and Algy—Algy is the soul of chivalry. All the Ancrams ever have been."

It had certainly taken some time for the worthy lady to discover that her son's marriage wasn't quite a satisfactory one, but when the discovery did force itself on her perceptions, she was by no means tender to Castalia. Her moral toughness of hide prevented her from being much hurt by such speeches as, "Dear me! Not happy together! Why, I thought this was such a model marriage, Mrs. Errington!" Or, "Ah! jealous and fretful, is she? Well, I always thought it wouldn't do. But of course I said nothing. You plumed yourself so much on the match, you know, at the time." She could always retreat to illogical strongholds of unreason, whence she sent forth retorts, and arguments, and statements, which were found to be unanswerable by the average intellect of Whitford.

"I wonder the woman isn't ashamed—really now!" exclaimed Miss Chubb once in the exasperation of listening to Mrs. Errington.

"Do you?" asked Rose McDougall tartly. "How odd! Now, as to me, nothing would surprise me more than to find Mrs. Errington ashamed of anything."

These and similar things had been freely spoken in Whitford, and although the world resented Mrs. Errington's manner of complaint, as being deficient in humility and candour, yet the world admitted that Mrs. Errington had substantial cause for complaint. The Honourable Castalia was really intolerable, and the only possible excuse for her behaviour was—what had been whispered with many nods and becks, and much mystery—that she was not quite of sound mind. And when the news began to circulate in Whitford that young Errington had gone to London suddenly, and almost secretly, the first, and most general, impression was that he had run away from his wife. To this solution the tradesmen to whom he owed money added, "And his debts!" Mrs. Errington's statement as to Lord Seely's illness was not much believed. And if he were ill, was it likely that my lord should cause Algernon Errington to be sent for? Later in the day it began to be known that Castalia had accompanied her husband to the coach-office, so that his departure had not been clandestine, so far as she was concerned, at all events. But was it not rather odd, the post-master rushing off in this manner? How did he manage to leave his business? Mr. Cooper never did such things! Not, probably, that it would make much difference whether Algernon Errington were here or not; for everybody knew pretty well that he was a mere cipher in the office, and Mr. Gibbs did everything!

As to Mr. Gibbs, he was much disquieted at his chief's absence. He had received a note which Algernon had left behind him to be delivered on the morning after his departure. But the note was not very satisfactory:—

"My dear Gibbs," it said—"I am off to town by the night mail. My wife's uncle, Lord Seely, is ill, and I must see him. I shall speak to him on your behalf, of course. The inheritance must soon fall to you, without waiting for the demise of the present holder. I shall be back on Wednesday at latest. Meanwhile, I trust implicitly to your discretion.

"Yours always, A. A. E."

This was oracular enough. But Mr. Obadiah Gibbs understood very well, as he read it, that by the "inheritance" which must soon fall to him, Algernon meant the place of postmaster. Still there was nothing in the note to commit Algernon in any way whatever. And his going off to London without leave and without notice, was a proceeding which shocked all the old clerk's notions of what was fitting. The thought did cross his mind. "Suppose he should never come back! Suppose he is off to America, as a short cut out of his troubles!" The thing was possible. And the possibility haunted Mr. Obadiah Gibbs persistently, though he tried to argue it away.

In the afternoon of Tuesday, Rhoda Maxfield walked into the post-office, and asked to speak with Mr. Errington. She was on foot and alone, and was looking so pretty and blooming as to arrest the attention of the dry old clerk. When he told her that Mr. Errington was away in London, and would not be back until the next day, she appeared disappointed. "Will you tell him, please, that I came, and wanted to speak to him particularly, and beg him to come to me as soon as ever he gets back to Whitford?" she said, in her soft lady's voice. Mr. Gibbs did not answer her. He stared straight over her shoulder, as if Medusa's head had suddenly appeared behind her. Rhoda turned to see what had petrified Mr. Gibbs into silence, and saw Castalia Errington!

Rhoda was startled, but more from sympathy with Gibbs than from any other reason. The quick colour mounted into her cheeks and deepened their blush rose hue to damask. "Oh, Mrs. Errington," she said, and held out her hand. Castalia did not take it; did not speak; did not, after one baleful stare of anger, look at her. "Come into the private office," she said, addressing Gibbs in a dry, husky voice, and with a manner of imperious harshness. As she stood with her hand on the lock of the door leading into the inner room, she looked round over her shoulder and flung these words at Rhoda like a missile: "You have made a mistake. My husband is not here to-day, of all days. He has been remiss in not letting you know of his journey. But men are apt, I have been told, to fail in polite attention to persons of your sort."

"Mrs. Errington!" cried Rhoda, turning pale, less at the words than at the look and tone, which interpreted their meaning, so that it was impossible altogether to misunderstand it; "I came here to speak to Mr. Errington about something he wished to hear of. And if I may say it to you instead——"

"To me? How dare you?" Castalia turned full on her with a livid, furious face. Poor, artificial, small product of her social surroundings as she usually seemed, the passion in the woman transfigured her now with a tragic fire and force, before which Rhoda's innocent lily nature seemed shrivelled and discoloured, like a flower in the blast of a furnace. It was strange to himself, but Mr. Gibbs, as he looked at the two women, and was fully conscious on which side lay the right in the matter, could not help feeling an inexplicable thrill of sympathy with Castalia as she stood there breathing quickly and hard, with dilated nostrils and suffering, tearless eyes. For the first time in his life Obadiah Gibbs felt disposed to spare and screen the postmaster's wife.

"I'll give the message when Mr. Errington comes back," said he to Rhoda, almost hustling her out of the office as he spoke. "The poor thing is not very well," he added, in a lower voice. "You mustn't think anything of her manner, nor bear malice, Miss Maxfield. Good morning."

When Rhoda was gone—feeling almost dizzy with surprise and fright—Gibbs followed Mrs. Errington into the inner office. He found her openly examining the contents of the table-drawer, having tossed all the papers she had found in it pell-mell on to the table. Gibbs entered and closed the door carefully. "Mrs. Errington," he began, intending to remonstrate with her—or, perhaps, utter something stronger than a remonstrance—on her manner of conducting herself in the office, when she interrupted him at once, looking up from the heap of papers. "What message did that creature give you for my husband?" she asked abruptly.

"Now, Mrs. Errington, you really must not go on in this way! I'm responsible to Mr. Errington, you know, for things being right here."

"Did you hear me? What message did that creature give you?"

"Oh now, really, Mrs. Errington, I think you ought not to speak of Rhoda Maxfield in that way. She is a very good girl, and you hurt her terribly by your manner."

Castalia smiled bitterly. "Did I?" she said. "Of course you're in league with her. Why does this good young woman come here in secret to see my husband? What can she want to say to him that cannot be said openly?"

"I cannot hear such things, ma'am; I cannot, indeed. If you would give yourself an instant for reflection, you would remember that Miss Maxfield offered to tell her message to you yourself."

"Offered to tell me! Do you suppose I am duped by such tricks? I heard her say, 'Send him to me directly he comes back'—heard it with my own ears. But of course you won't tell me the truth."

"I am obliged to say, Mrs. Errington, that you really must leave the office. I am very sorry, but I am responsible in Mr. Errington's absence, and I cannot allow you to turn everything topsy-turvy here in this way. There has been trouble enough by your coming here already."

"Trouble enough! Who says so? Who is troubled?"

"Mr. Errington is troubled, and I am troubled, and—in short, it's altogether out of rule."

"Then he confesses, does he, that he is afraid of my coming here to make discoveries about him? Why should he be troubled if he had nothing to conceal?"

Castalia spoke with trembling eagerness and excitement. She had thrown all semblance of dignity or reserve to the winds. Gibbs looked at her, and a doubt came into his mind as to whether his suspicions, and other people's suspicions, about her were quite so well-founded as he had thought. She was terribly violent, jealous, insolent, unconverted, full of the leaven of unrighteousness—but was she a practised hypocrite, a woman experienced in dishonesty? For the life of him, Obadiah Gibbs could not feel so sure of this as he had felt, now that he looked into her poor, haggard face, and met her eyes, and heard her utterly incautious and vehement speeches.

"As to me not telling you the truth, Mrs. Errington," he said, "I suppose you know the truth as to why your visits here bring trouble on everybody?"

"Tell it me—you!"

"Well, I—oh, you must be aware of it, I suppose. And if I was to tell you, you would only be more angry with me than ever, though what I have done to excite your displeasure I don't know."

"Tell me this truth that I know so well! Do you think I should seriously care for anything you could say, except as it concerned my husband?"

"Mrs. Errington, I don't know whether you are feigning or not. But, anyway, I think it my duty to answer you with Christian sincerity. It is borne in upon me that I ought to do so."

"Go on, go on, go on!" cried Castalia, drumming with restless fingers on the table, and looking up at the clerk with eyes that blazed with excitement and impatience.

"You are aware that there have been unpleasant circumstances at the post-office—letters lost—money-letters lost. Well, your name has been mentioned in connection with those losses. It is known in Whitford that you come haunting the office at all hours when your husband is away. A little while ago you paid a bill with some notes that were endorsed in a peculiar way. People ask where you got those notes. I thought it my duty to mention the subject to Mr. Errington the other day. He was greatly distressed, of course. He said he should interrogate you about the notes. My advice to you is—in all sincerity and charity, as the Lord sees me—to tell your husband the truth, whatever it is."

He ended his speech with a tremor of compassion in his voice, and with a sudden breakdown of his rhetorical manner; for Castalia's face changed so piteously, so terribly, as he spoke, that the man's heart was deeply touched. She grew ashy pale. The quick fingers that had been tapping impatiently on the table seemed turned to lead. Her mouth was half open, and her eyes stared straight before her at the blank wall of the yard, as though they saw a spectre.

"Lord have mercy on us, she is guilty!" thought Obadiah Gibbs. And at that moment, if he could have hidden her crime from the eyes of all men, I believe he would have done it at the cost of a lie.

"Of course, you're not bound to say anything to me, you know, Mrs. Errington," he went on, after a short pause. And, as he spoke he bent nearer to her, to rouse her, for she seemed neither to hear nor to see him. "You'd better go home now at once, you don't seem very strong."

Still she did not move.

"Look here, Mrs. Errington, I—you may rely upon my not breathing a word—not one syllable to anybody else, if you—if you will try to make things straight again as far as in your power lies. Go home now, pray do!"

Still, she did not move.

"You don't look much able to walk, I fear. Shall I send the boy for a fly? Let me send for a fly?"

He softly touched her shoulder as he spoke, and she immediately turned her head and answered with a composure that startled him, "Yes; get me a fly." Then she sat quite still again, staring at the wall as before.

Gibbs went out into the outer office and sent the boy for a vehicle. There he remained, pen in hand, behind his desk until the jingle of the fly was heard at the door. He went back himself to the private office to call Castalia, and found her sitting in exactly the same place and attitude. She rose mechanically to her feet when he told her the fly was ready; but, as she began to walk towards the door, she staggered and caught at Gibbs's arm. He supported her with a sort of quiet gravity—much as if he had been her old servant, and she a cripple whose infirmity was a matter of course—which showed much delicacy of feeling; and, as they neared the door, he said in her ear, "Take my advice ma'am, and tell your husband the truth." She turned her eyes on him with a singular look, but said nothing. "Tell him the truth! and—and look upward. Lift your heart in prayer. There is a fountain of grace and love ready for all who seek it!"

"Not for me," she answered, in a very low but distinct voice.

"Oh, my poor soul, don't say so! Don't think so!"

By this time she was in the carriage, having been almost lifted into it by Gibbs. She was perfectly quiet and tearless; and, as the vehicle drove away, and Gibbs stood watching it disappear, he said to himself that her face was as the face of a corpse.

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK I. CHAPTER VI. DRAWN STAKES.

In a top room of a small house in a mean street, one of the oldest in the capital city of New South Wales—a street which dated from the days when the colony was young—we find, shortly after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, a woman engaged in the predestined and everlasting avocation of her sex—sewing. From Homer to Hood, from Solomon to Jean Ingelow, the poets have recognised the universal woman's work; with every variation of fancy and of circumstance, the eternal "she" is always "sewing her long white seam." Wretchedest of images, and most peaceful, hardest of lots, and most merciful provision of nature is this same sewing. It has healed many hearts, if it has crushed many; on the whole, it is a great blessing and resource to women, when it does not signify their own and their children's daily bread.

It would have needed only a glance round the room and at its tenant to assure an observer that in the present instance the latter condition did not exist. Every object within sight, and the aspect of the woman herself, bespoke poverty. Not quite abject, perhaps, for the neglect and uncleanliness which must needs accompany abject penury had not set their mark upon the woman and her surroundings; but grinding, severe, rigidly exclusive of any touch of grace or comfort; a condition of existence tied and bound to the narrowest necessity of living. The room was not very small, but the ceiling was low, and, just as in England and in winter an impression of poverty would be conveyed by the absence of a fire, so, in the summer time at Sydney, a similar impression was made by the absence of any means of excluding light and consequent heat. No well-fitting Venetians tempered the strong sunshine graciously to the tired eyes of the occupant of the room. On a string, fastened by nails on either side of one window, hung a thin worn shawl, as the only blind, hardly intercepting the rays of the sun which struck upon the bare walls and the clean, uncovered floor.

The furniture of the room was composed of the barest necessaries: a deal table, with a deep drawer, was heaped with the materials of some coarse needlework with which the occupant of the dismal apartment was engaged; in one corner stood a small iron bedstead, and on a couple of shelves fixed in the wall, beside the now unused stove, were ranged some homely kitchen utensils. The contrast presented by her surroundings to the woman who sat working by the table, working with the concentrated attention and diligence which indicate the daily unresting occupation of a life, was striking. She was still so young, that toil and hardship had not yet laid their wasting marks upon the freshness and the bloom of her beauty. A few years more than the twenty which had already been told off her life, might see her form too luxuriant, her complexion too deep, her features too marked; at present she was endowed with every grace of womanhood in figure, and she had a face which a painter might have chosen for its colour, and a sculptor for its form; a face contradictory of the theories of race and birth, for it was one of which any observer would say, "How high bred!" or, perhaps, even, "How aristocratic!" And yet the woman was only one of the people—the daughter of a ship's mate who had married a lodging-house keeper at Melbourne. There was nothing in her surroundings or her education to give her that "superior" look which is a rare, but always a dangerous, distinction for a woman of her class. If the contradiction between her face and her abode was striking, no less so was the discord between the features of that face and its expression. The latter was full of care and despondency. She worked on and on, never lifting her eyes from the work in her hands, busily moving the pins which marked it off at intervals; and smoothing the stitches down with the handle of her scissors, each time that she had to add a fold to the bundle of completed sewing on the table in front of her. The heat of the day was very great, and the seamstress felt it a good deal. Sometimes she sighed impatiently, as she pushed her heavy fair hair off her forehead, or dipped her finger-tips in a bowl of water which stood on the floor beside her. A common clock hung against the wall, the sole interruption to the blank bareness of the whitewashed surface.

The woman looked up at the clock now and then as she worked—more and more frequently as the afternoon wore on, and her tedious task drew nearer to its conclusion—and once only did she suspend the movement of her nimble fingers. This was while she drew a crumpled paper from her pocket, smoothed it out upon the table, read the lines it contained with the air of one who knew them well already, and was but fitting them into their place in the train of her thoughts.

"Not a word of truth in it," she muttered; "all a lie from beginning to end; a lie, like himself, and his love."

And then she resumed her sewing.

At length the work was done, and the sewer rose, folded it, and made it up into a portable parcel. Then she lifted up the old shawl which hung over the window, and looked out. It was very hot still, and she was very weary. She could not face the hot walk to a far-distant street, whither she would have to carry her work back to her employers; she must rest awhile. So she lay down on her bed, with her hands behind her head, and closed her eyes. Not to sleep, oh no—she must not sleep, she could not afford time to sleep—she was already a little late, and if she did not get to the draper's with her work, before the shop should be shut, she would receive no pay that night. No pay, in her case, signified no supper, and she must eat. Not that she felt hungry, she seldom felt hungry, but she had not eaten since morning; there was nothing in the cupboard except a bit of bread and a cupful of brown sugar; and she must eat to-night in order to have strength for to-morrow. The food would have to be bought, and the money to buy it must be trudged for, full two weary miles. A little rest, and she would be able for the walk. So she lay down and stretched her shapely limbs; her white arms curved grandly on the pillow, and the thick coil of her fair hair rested in the hollow of her hands.

In a very few minutes the tired worker was sleeping soundly, her bonnet and her bundle by her side, profoundly oblivious of the necessity which rendered her slumber cruel to herself. With the deep sweet sleep which veiled the tired and anxious eyes, but cast the shadow of their thick dark lashes on her flushed cheeks, all that was painful in her face was hidden. The lips were not compressed, but parted in a sweet childlike half-smile, and moment by moment the slight wanness which showed about the temples was smoothed out by the gentle hand of the restorer. The time passed, and she showed no signs of waking. Better so now, for the draper's shop, two miles off, is shut, and there will be no money and no supper to-night for the weary seamstress.

How long she had slept she knew not. The evening had gone down into the quick-coming night, the delicious freshness that comes with the night in that climate was on the air, the light in the room was the light of stars, and shade gathered in the corners, when a hand knocked at the door. At first the sound mingled with her dream and did not disturb her, but it was repeated so loudly that it was rather a thump than a knock. She started from the bed, and with the bewilderment of sudden waking, forgetting that the door was locked on the inside, she cried, "Come in!"

The reply was another thump, louder than the preceding. She lighted a candle, turned the key, and, cautiously opening the door a little way, found herself confronted by a man, at sight of whom she uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The man was tall, broad-shouldered,

dark-haired, and dark-eyed; not ill-looking, but shabbily dressed, in much-used and ill-fitting clothes, of the kind which, when new, would have been bought at a slop shop. He carried in his hand a small valise of rubbed and worn calf-skin, capable of containing a kit of only the most moderate dimensions; and had altogether an unmistakable appearance of being down on his luck. So much the candle which the woman held revealed to her, and the effect on her was curious.

The tone in which she uttered her few words of surprised recognition indicated neither pleasure nor tenderness, yet it did indicate that the man was something to her — that he was no stranger. But when he had entered the room, without any other greeting than:

"Yes, it is I. I've come back, you see," she said nothing, but looked at him steadily, from head to foot, with a covert attention, mingled with scorn, which she was at no pains to hide.

The man flung his valise on the floor, and said, angrily:

"You give me a warm welcome, surely. Haven't you another candle here? There's no light to see you by."

The woman fetched a second candle from the cupboard, and set it on the table. She had not uttered a word; and when she had set the light down, she quietly folded her arms, and stood looking at her visitor with the same attentive, scornful gaze. He had seated himself, after noisily dragging one of the two chairs which the poor room boasted across the bare floor, and he now brought his clenched hand down on the table with a thump.

"What the devil do you mean," he said, "by behaving like this? You know I could not get here sooner; you know I could not help leaving you so long. You have had my letter?"

"Oh yes. I've had your letter."

"Well, then, what do you mean?"

If there was any fear of the speaker in the woman's heart—if she remembered that she was alone with him, quite in his power, and saw that there was a lowering look in his face, indicative of no gentle feeling or purpose towards her, she concealed her fear bravely. There was not a quiver of her lip, or the least tremor in her voice, as she spoke for the first time, answering him:

"I mean that I have had your letter, and don't believe what you say in it."

"Oh, you don't, don't you?" the man said, with a laugh that had an unreal ring in it. "I should think you might, however little you liked it. Strikes me you've only to look at me—I'm not very flourishing to look at."

"No, you're not very flourishing to look at; but you've better clothes than them somewhere. And that's a fine shirt under your greasy waistcoat, too. But"— her voice and manner changed: she dropped the sneering tone and adopted the serious —"what's the good of all this? I know your letter is nothing but lies; I know your old clothes, and seedy boots, and your look of having come off a long journey are all lies; and it's just as well to tell you so at once, and save you the trouble of telling them or acting them all over again, or of telling and acting more."

"You are a saucy devil," he answered slowly; "but you are saying what you say from some foundation; you are not talking at random. What foundation is it? What do you know, more than what I have written to you?"

"Different from what you have written to me, you mean," she said, quietly, as she took the second chair and drew it close to the table, facing him. "You have written to me that you have been wandering about, trying to obtain employment in vain, and that you have been barely able to live. You have written to me that, by degrees, you have lost hope in ever doing anything here, and think it best to try and scrape together the means of going back to England in the cheapest way it can be done. You sent me no money since you left me with three pounds between me and starvation—or the kind of work that is only another name for it;—and you wrote to me that you had little hope of bringing me any."

"You believe that part of it, I should think?" said the man, with a sneer.

"Yes; I believe that part of it. The fact is, I don't believe that you have honestly tried to get work, or that you have had anything to suffer. You have amused yourself well enough, I daresay, and you have not troubled yourself much to think about what I have been doing. I have had plenty to suffer. It is only by the hardest work that I have only just not starved—that is all."

His eyes travelled round the room, noting its utter bareness, and there was some trouble in their gaze.

"I am very hungry now," she said. "I was going out to get some money that was due to me, and to buy some food, when I fell asleep, and slept until your knock roused me. I am faint now."

She put her hand before her eyes, and leaned heavily over the table. He stood up:

"Do you mean to say there's no food in the place?"

"None but a little bread, and no money to get any."

"I'll go and fetch some."

"I wish you would," she said, simply.

The man left the room, and hurried down the staircase. The woman sat in the same attitude; but she blew one of the candles out. He returned speedily, and brought some cooked meat, which he set before her with bread. She ate some of it in silence, and he observed her, also in silence.

"Will you drink some whisky with that cold water?" he asked her at length, drawing a flask from his coat-pocket.

"No," she said; "there's a spoonful of tea left, and I'll make it by-and-by. I am strong enough now to listen to you and to say what I want."

They were a strange pair, these two, meeting thus after an evidently long absence, and with a purpose in the mind of each, undiscerned, though, perhaps, suspected, by the other. The tone of both was inimical but restrained—the tone of rival strategists, or players when the stakes are serious. There was no affectation about the woman; she was not playing a part. She had meant to have a final explanation with the man, whenever he should present himself, and therefore his coming had not found her unprepared. She needed food, and she took it from him; but the incident did not alter the situation. They were still antagonists. This had not been his intention. He came, as she knew well, convinced that he had successfully deceived her, to deceive her still further; and he was disconcerted. Not so she. The woman who prepared herself for what was coming in the interview thus strangely commenced, had thoroughly made up her mind about what she purposed to say, and the alternative whose acceptance she intended should be its final issue. What there was on her mind she would presently tell; what there was in her heart it would have been difficult to decide, upon the evidence of her face and her manner. Had she ever loved this man? Did she love him still? Was it hate or love, pride or resentment, which made her so cold and quiet;—which invested a woman who had not the instinct or the training of a lady with perfect self-restraint, and enabled her to keep her nerves and her temper in subjection?

"What do you want?" asked the man.

"First say what you have to say, and I will tell you."

"If you don't believe my letter, you won't believe me, I suppose; and I don't know that it matters whether you do or not. What I have got to say is what I have said in my letter, and something more."

"Say the something more, and have done with it."

He gave her a dark look, a look from which a woman might well shrink; but this woman did not shrink. In all probability she was desperately afraid of him in her heart, but she hid her fear.

"I am played out, then, if you must have it without any roundabout. I can't get anything to do, and there is no good time before fellows who try to live on their wits here. So I am going to cut New South Wales and try another colony."

She turned very pale, and now she looked at him intently.

"Another colony? Not England?"

"England! What should I do in England? I left England because I had no chance there, ever so long ago. Besides, if I had such an idea, how could I get back to England? That costs money, and you may take your oath I've got none of that, whatever else you don't believe about me."

She still looked at him intently, but she said nothing.

"No, no. I shall scratch along in the colonies somehow; there's no more England for me. I need not say don't trouble your head about what becomes of me, for you are not likely to do that."

If he was trying to make her speak, to get a protest from her, he failed. She had a purpose in view, indeed, but a protest would not advance, anger would not gain it.

"I have not much notion myself. I must get out of this, and I have no plan, except that I shall try my luck with the few pounds I can muster in Victoria. I have not much more than what will take me there."

"And me?"

"Oh no, not you! Don't think it. That's just the something else I had to say to you. It's about time you and I came to an understanding, and you are a sensible girl, though you've a devil of a temper and a tongue too, when you're not bent on keeping it quiet. It's my luck that you are bent on that to-night, for some reason best known to yourself; and you'll see the sense of what I've got to say."

She had started slightly at his words, "Oh no, not you," but had instantly controlled herself, and she let him go on.

"You've had a bad time of it lately—you say so, and I don't deny it. Now, there's not the least chance of a better time for you so long as you and I are in the same boat. I was an infernal fool—and something worse, if you like to call me so, only hard words don't mend matters—to take you away with me as I did; and you were as great a fool to come."

"And, also, something worse," she interrupted him, saying the words quietly.

He gave her another dark look.

"I did not think my run of luck was going to be so short. I did not think you would have to come to this sort of thing; but there it is, and you must make the best of it. We've made a bad thing of it so far. So we've got to cry quits, and part company. That is what I came to say; I daresay I shouldn't have said it straight out if you hadn't made yourself so confoundedly unpleasant; but I should have said it anyhow. I don't know whether you like it, though you've got over your liking for me a goodish while ago; but you'll have to lump it; and so the sooner it's done with the better."

He rose, lifted the valise from the floor, laid it on the table with needless noise, and began to unbuckle its straps.

"Stay," said the woman, who, while he was uttering the last few sentences of his brutal speech, had covered her eyes with one hand; "stay! You have spoken, and I have understood you. I know you have said what is not true; I know that nothing you have told me of your life since you left me is true; and that the future you pretend to believe in is not the future you do believe in. I know you have money and plans which I am not to share. Very well, I don't want to share them. I will work for myself still; I can do it, even in the wretched way I have been doing it. But there is another way for me to earn a decent living, if only I am sure of just one thing."

"And that is——?" He looked curiously at her, with his hand on the strap, pausing before he pulled it through the buckle.

"That I shall be, for all the rest of my life, quite free from you?"

"Oh, by—— If that's all you want to set you up in a new line of life, you're welcome to the assurance," said the man with a coarse laugh. "I'm immensely anxious to be rid—'free,' as you call it—of you; as anxious as you can possibly be to get rid of me. So that is the new device you have hit upon for earning a genteel livelihood——"

"A 'decent' one, I said."

"A decent livelihood then. The new device, I say, suits us both. Act on it, I beg, and don't be in the least afraid that I shall interfere with you. Egad, I wasn't fair to my luck just now—it isn't half bad since we're both of one mind."

"Why didn't you desert me altogether, quietly, without coming back at all?" asked the woman. She put her strange irrelevant question with a calm consciousness which did seem to throw him off his balance for a moment. He stared at her in unaffected surprise, but she met his eyes steadily with hers.

"Why?—well, I'll tell you why. Because if you had raised a hue and cry after me in the colonies, you could have kept me from getting a chance; and, of course, after a time you'd have done that. So I thought it better to come back and settle matters. Don't you see?"

"I do see."

This time there was a faint smile in her face, and she spoke rather to herself than to him.

"Oh, you do see, do you? Suppose we get on, then, and come to an understanding about this being free of me?"

"I have something else to say first."

She paused, and her eyes filled with sudden tears. She spoke the next words huskily:

"You have done me a great deal of harm, and I have done you no good, and we both know it. Still, though we don't care for each other any longer, better days might come, if—if we both tried to do what is right."

He tossed his head derisively.

"For heaven's sake, don't preach! You too!"

"I'm not preaching. I am only asking you whether you could not bring yourself to try an honest life, and let me try it with you? This one will end ill. Is there no other? I don't mean —

there—we must face that independent of each other—but is there no other that we might try now? I don't want an easy share in it; I am well content to work, and I will give you no trouble."

"Who has been talking nonsense to you?" said the man, violently. "Stop all this at once. What a fool you must be to talk such trash to me, when I come to you for the express purpose of telling you that all this must come to an end at once."

"Then you have quite determined not to keep your promise to me?"

"Quite!" he answered, with an oath. "Let's have no more of it. I don't want to be rough with you, and I mean us to part friends; but it's got to be parting, and I'll stand no nonsense. It's not desertion, you know, for I'm telling you plainly and fairly that I will have nothing more to say to you, and that I'm off."

Precisely, in her former manner, the woman said:

"And suppose I should raise the hue and cry you talked of just now, in the colonies?"

"You won't do that now, because you have fair warning that it would do you no good."

"I won't do it, certainly, but not for that reason."

"That's nothing to me. You can do as you please. There's no desertion in the case, and there's no 'brutality,' as you women are so fond of calling anything you don't like."

He loosened the straps of his calf-skin valise, and laid it open on the table. It contained a scanty supply of poor clothing, from among which he produced a parcel. It was a flat box, with a string tied round it. This he loosened, and pushed the box across the table to the woman.

"There's twenty pounds in that. It's a very large slice out of all I've got; at all events it's all I can give you. Will it start you in that way of earning the decent livelihood you talked of?"

"Yes, it will do that." She took the money as she had taken the food.

"Then I'm off."

He buckled the valise straps and set it on the floor. He resumed his low-crowned felt hat, and then he stood, irresolute, for a moment. She uttered no sound. Her face was half-hidden by one hand, the other lay on the table.

"Good-bye," he said, after a slight pause. "You'll come to no harm, now you're rid of me; and I daresay you wish me none."

"I wish you none."

"Shake hands upon it. Hang it, girl, it's only the old story; it couldn't have lasted, you know."

"It could not have lasted, I know."

He took her hand for an instant; she neither offered nor withdrew it. The next he had left the room.

The woman held her head up, listening, until his footsteps were no more heard; then she laid it upon her extended arms on the table, and wept, with heavy, long-drawn weeping. She made no attempt to check it—she let the tears and the deep sobs come—but the words she murmured were not words of grief only:

"I did it because I promised, because it was right, and I have come to know the right, and I suppose I could have borne it if he had said yes. But oh, the relief! I thank God for the relief of being free; for my escape from such a fate!"

* * * * *

Mr. Dale, who did not seem to have any settled occupation at Sydney, made it a point to call at the post-office every day, to inquire for letters directed to him. He occasionally received one or two, but they were not those which he was desirous to have. At last, after ten days of fruitless expectation, a letter was handed to him, which he took with a satisfied smile. He read the missive in the street. It was brief, and its contents were as follows:

"I know you will be sorry for me. My father caught the fever, and has been ill ever since that dreadful day of the funeral. He is dangerously ill. Everything is changed, and I am too wretched. I. P."

A week later the newspapers announced the death of Mr. John Pemberton, of Mount Kiera Lodge.

MISTRESS WOFFINGTON.

In October, 1741, Horace Walpole wrote to Sir Horace Mann, at Florence: "I have been two or three times at the play, very unwillingly; for nothing was ever so bad as the actors, except the company. There is much in vogue here a Mrs. Woffington, a bad actress; but she has life." Walpole and his friends were not much disposed to admire anything or anybody. Of plays and players they were particularly severe critics. About a year before the letter to Mann, Walpole's other close friend, Mr.

Conway, had written to him, evidently in reference to some previous remark upon the subject: "So you cannot bear Mrs. Woffington? Yet all the town is in love with her. To say the truth, I am glad to find somebody to keep me in countenance, for I think she is an impudent Irish-faced girl."

It is certain that these fastidious gentlemen were in a woful minority. The actress had made her first appearance before a London audience at Covent-garden Theatre on the 6th of November, 1740. Rich, the manager, had seen her playing Sir Harry Wildair at Dublin in the spring of that year, and forthwith had secured her services for his ensuing season. Her success in London was beyond question.

She was an Irish girl; that was true enough. As for being "Irish-faced," where was the reproach? Her loveliness could not for a moment be disputed. Tom Davies describes her enthusiastically as "the most beautiful woman that ever adorned a theatre." Almost as much may be gathered from the portraits of her still extant — the Hogarth, for instance, now in the collection of the Garrick Club; as Lamb wrote of it, "the Woffington (a true Hogarth) on a couch, dallying and dangerous." And there is an engraving by Faber, after a portrait by Eccard, painted in 1745. The lady represented is certainly a beauty: her features refined, if not perfectly regular; the lips full, but most shapely; the nose straight, but delicately modelled; the eyes large, dark, and brilliant, with arched, mobile, strongly-defined eyebrows. She wears no powder, but oakleaves are twined among the waving rich-brown tresses that stream down to her shoulders; her costume is one of tangled, crumpled satin draperies, such as painters much affected in those days; a striped scarf floats across her, fastened by a pearl buckle; she bears in her white tapering Vandyke hands a large handsomely-bound volume of Shakespeare. The poet is seen, in one of his most admired attitudes, engraved upon the cover of the book.

Her origin was humble enough. She is said to have been born in Dame-street, Dublin, in the year 1719; her father a journeyman bricklayer, her mother a washerwoman. Yet some small measure of education she obtained at a day school between her fifth and tenth years. Her father dying, however, she could no longer be spared from home; there was an end of her schooling; she helped her mother at the wash-tub. Sent to draw water from the Liffey, she was seen by a certain Madame Violante, who was much struck with the grace and good looks of the little girl, and forthwith offered to engage her as an apprentice.

Madame Violante was an Italian rope-dancer, famed for her feats of strength and agility. During the years 1726 and 1727 she had exhibited her extraordinary performances in London, meeting with great success. In 1728 or so she opened a booth in Dublin. Her achievements were not wholly pleasing; she made forcible appeals to the lovers of the dreadful and the dangerous. She danced upon the high rope with children in some way appended to her feet, by way of enhancing the difficulties of her task, and affording the public the prized spectacle of imperilled life. As Madame Violante's apprentice, Mistress Margaret Woffington first appeared in public, tied to the feet of her mistress.

But at last these exciting entertainments began to pall upon the Dublin public. A change of programme became very desirable. In London The Beggar's Opera was just then, as the old joke described the case, making Gay rich and Rich gay. Madame Violante produced the work in Dublin, providing appropriate scenery and decorations; but, in view of the fact that her booth was unlicensed by the authorities, assigning the characters, not to mature performers, but to a company of children. Already in London a troop of Lilliputians, as they were called, had successfully represented The Beggar's Opera, when we read, "in order that the childish exhibition might be supported in all its branches, the manager contrived to send a book of the songs across the stage, by a flying Cupid, to Frederick Prince of Wales." It was, probably, in imitation of this performance, that Madame Violante duly instructed her apprentices and pupils, and produced her infantile version of the piece. Polly Peachum was impersonated by little Woffington, whose mother, it would seem, at this time kept a huckster's shop on Ormond-quay. Other of the juvenile performers adhered to the profession of the stage, and arrived at distinction in future years. Master Barrington, who played Filch, was known subsequently as a successful low comedian skilled in Irish characters. Master Isaac Sparks, the representative of Peachum, figured at a later 'date as an admired clown and actor of low comedy. Miss Betty Barnes, the Captain Macheath, was afterwards, as Mrs. Martin, and by a second marriage, as Mrs. Workman, an actress of considerable reputation.

In a few years the managers of the old-established theatre in Smock-alley grew jealous of the success of Madame Violante's booth; the authority of the Lord Mayor was invoked, and the performances upon that unlicensed stage were peremptorily forbidden. New theatres were presently built in Rainsford-street, beyond the jurisdiction of the mayor, and in Aungier-street. Mrs. Woffington was now chiefly known as a dancer, and was required to entertain the public between the acts, or in the intervals of performance. She was a favourite, however, and her every appearance was welcomed with applause. But she was entrusted with no character of importance until, in 1737, at the Aungier-street Theatre she appeared as Ophelia, achieving genuine success in the part. "She now," writes a contemporary critic, "began to unveil those beauties and display those graces and accomplishments which, for so many years afterwards, charmed mankind. Her ease, elegance, and simplicity in Polly in The Beggar's Opera, with the natural manner of her singing the songs, pleased much. Her girls were esteemed excellent, and her Miss Lucy, in The Virgin Unmasked of Fielding, brought houses. But she never displayed herself to more advantage than in characters where she assumed the other sex." Her figure is described as "a model of perfection." On the occasion of her benefit she appeared in the farce of The Female Officer, by Brooke, after having personated the Phillis of Steele's comedy of The Conscious Lovers. It was not until some two years later that she first essayed the character of Sir Harry Wildair, acquiring by that representation a fame that endured throughout her career.

Even when Lamb, some forty years ago, ventured upon his special pleading for the artificial comedy of the last century, Farquhar had almost ceased to be an acted dramatist. The comedy of The Constant Couple, of which Sir Harry Wildair is the hero, vanished from the stage more than half a century since. In truth, comedies can rarely be expected to endure: they picture manners, and manners change; they become possessed at last of merely an archaic sort of interest, and fail to please playgoers, who are not antiquarians. Farquhar met with severe criticism even in his own day: Pope accused him of writing "pert, low dialogue;" Steele thought Sir Harry Wildair decidedly "low." His comedies were found, from the first, deficient in refinement and in "an air of good breeding." They thrived rather upon their humour than their wit; they are scarcely works of art, and yet they are ingenious enough; while, in regard to action, briskness, and animal spirits, they know few equals in the whole dramatic repertory. The plots are generally wild frolics; the dialogue is a string of jests and absurdities; the characters seem all to have been tippling champagne before entering upon the scene.

After the death of Wilkes, the original Sir Harry, The Constant Couple had been shelved for seven years; no actor had ventured to play the part. Farquhar himself had been wont to declare that when Wilkes died there would no longer be a Wildair. In London, Mrs. Woffington did not undertake the character until she had thoroughly gained the goodwill of her audience as Sylvia, in Farquhar's Recruiting Officer; as Lady Sadlife, in Cibber's Double Gallant; and as Aura, in Charles Johnson's Country Lasses. She appeared at last as Sir Harry, "by particular desire," repeating the character twenty times during her first season. The fame of her Dublin success had reached Covent-garden. The theatre was crowded to witness her performances; the delight of the town with the new actress seemed to know no bounds. The best critics hastened to applaud her exertions. Nor was her triumph, as Tate Wilkinson points out, merely the whim of a winter. "She remained the unrivalled Wildair during her life. . . . She appeared with the true spirit of a well-bred rake of quality. . . . Her ease, manner of address, vivacity, and figure of a young man of fashion were never more happily exhibited. The best proof of this matter," he continues, "is the well-known success and profit she brought to the different theatres in England and Ireland, wherever her name was published for Sir Harry Wildair. The managers had recourse to her for this character whenever they feared the want of an audience; and, indeed, for some years before she died, as she never by her articles of engagement was to play it but with her own consent, she always conferred a favour on the manager, whenever she changed her sex and filled the house."

Garrick dissented from the general opinion of Mrs. Woffington's Sir Harry. It was a great attempt for a woman, he was willing to admit, but still it was not Sir Harry Wildair. No woman, he urged, could ever so overcome the physical difficulty of voice and figure as to identify herself with a male character. The justice of this objection is obvious enough. The character of Sir Harry, however, is not to be judged by ordinary standards; it hardly affects to be real or to resemble nature; it is the creation of Farquhar—an incarnation of fantastic sportiveness. And something, it is clear, the part might gain at the hands of a female interpreter; at whatever cost to her, a measure of its grossness would disappear. Much that Wildair is required to say and do would be in such wise deprived of significance, and real advantage would accrue to the representation. At any rate, when, two seasons later, Garrick himself undertook the character, the result was very complete failure. He played the part upon two occasions only, and then abandoned it for ever.

It seems agreed that Mrs. Woffington's voice was deficient in music—was even harsh in tone. The defect may have been a qualification for her assumption of male characters. "Mrs. Woffington is much improved," wrote Mrs. Delany in 1752, "and did the part of Lady Townley better than I have seen it done since Mrs. Oldfield's time. Her person is fine, her arms a little ungainly, and her voice disagreeable, but she pronounces her words perfectly well and she speaks sensibly." Upon another occasion Mrs. Delany complains of the actress that she spoiled her figure by "the enormous size of her hoops"—hoops being then very much in fashion. When Foote presented his Diversions of a Morning at the Haymarket Theatre, he ridiculed the players of the day, imitating them, while allotting them occupations in the streets. To Quin was assigned the post of a watchman, with a sonorous cry of "Past twelve o'clock, and a cloudy morning!" Delane, who was alleged to have but one eye, was appointed a beggar-man in St. Paul's-churchyard; Ryan, whose voice was sharp and shrill, a razor-grinder; and Mrs. Woffington, because of her harsh tones, an orange-woman at the playhouse.

Rich had engaged the actress for Covent-garden Theatre upon a salary of nine pounds per week; but at the end of the season, tempted probably by an increased rate of payment, she joined the standard of Drury-lane. She now appeared as Rosalind; as Nerissa; as Lady Brute, in The Provoked Wife; and as Mrs. Sullen, in The Beaux' Stratagem. On the occasion of her benefit she played Clarissa, in The Confederacy of Sir John Vanbrugh. This was Garrick's first season in London. On the 19th of October, 1741, he had made his first appearance at the theatre in Goodman's-fields. In the May following his services were transferred to Drury-lane.

Soon Garrick was at the feet of the beautiful and irresistible Mrs. Woffington. For three years he was her devoted admirer, a fond suitor for her hand. As she informed Arthur Murphy, she was so near being married to Garrick, that he had tried the wedding-ring on her finger. And, after a manner, she loved him, it would seem. It was scarcely to be wondered at. He was young, handsome, vivacious, and—the fashion. He was absolutely at the head of his profession. Herself an actress, she could not but recognise his consummate genius as an actor. They had visited Dublin together during the summer of 1742, and been received with extraordinary enthusiasm. "Garrick was caressed by all ranks of people as a theatrical phenomenon." So wrote the historian of the Irish stage, who acknowledges that Mrs. Woffington largely contributed towards his success, and was nearly as great a favourite. The crowds attracted to the theatre during the hottest months of the year produced an "epidemic distemper, which seized upon and carried off numbers, and from this circumstance was called the Garrick fever." Mrs. Woffington, thanks, perhaps, to the assistance and instructions of her fellow-player, now took rank as an actress of tragedy. She appeared as Cordelia, Belvidera, and Lady Anne, to the Lear, Pierre, and Richard of Garrick.

Returned from Dublin, the lady, with Garrick and Macklin, agreed to "keep house" together. They formed a sort of partnership, were understood to have but one purse between them, and each by turn managed the affairs of their house, No. 6, Bow-street. They had planned to open a sort of histrionic academy, to teach acting to all comers; but this scheme was speedily abandoned. Altogether, their establishment had its difficulties. Garrick was accused of being parsimonious—throughout his life a certain thriftiness that characterised him was made the subject of much bitter attack. On the other hand, complaint arose that Mrs. Woffington was far too lavish in her expenditure. "With his domestic saving we have nothing to do," said Dr. Johnson, when the matter was brought under his notice. "I remember drinking tea with him long ago, when Peg Woffington made it, and he grumbled at her for making it too strong." When the story was repeated to Reynolds, he mentioned an additional circumstance: "Why," cried Garrick of the tea, "it's as red as blood!"

The first quarrel was with Macklin. He, with Garrick and other members of the company, had revolted against the misrule of Fleetwood, the manager of Drury-lane; but Garrick, finding the cause hopeless, owing to the persistent opposition of the Lord Chamberlain, made a separate peace for himself, and resumed his professional duties. Macklin, deeming himself betrayed, became thereupon Garrick's bitter foe. To the end of his very long life, Macklin persisted in depreciating, reproaching, and maligning his former comrade. Some two years later, and the lovers parted. Garrick hinted his desire to be released from his promise to marry Mrs. Woffington. "Go, sir!" she said indignantly. "Henceforward, I separate myself from you for ever. From this hour I decline to see you, or to speak with you, except in the course of our professional business, or in the presence of a third person." And she kept her word. She was very angry, and she never forgave him. She returned his letters and presents. He craved permission, so malice reported, to retain, as a memento of her, a pair of very valuable diamond shoe-buckles, which she had given him in the early days of their intimacy. The town greatly diverted itself with this quarrel between the fond actor and the frail actress. Various lampoons appeared in the public prints; caricatures, bearing hard upon the gentleman, were exhibited in the print-shop windows. But Garrick's conduct in the matter disentitles him to sympathy; he well deserved, indeed, the public derision and contempt that he incurred. Dazzled by the beauty and the brilliant histrionic gifts of the actress, he had wooed and besought her hand; abruptly disentangling himself from his engagement, he was, least of all, entitled to reproach her with perfidy, or to dwell upon the laxity of her mode of life.

For a time he had been content enough to play Desgrieux to her Manon Lescaut. She had been his "Lovely Peggy" in the past. He had addressed her the lines beginning—

> Once more I'll tune my vocal shell,
> To hills and dales my passion tell—
> A flame which time can never quell,
> Which burns for thee, my Peggy!

But the fire of his love had now absolutely gone out. He reviled her cruelly enough, all the circumstances of the case being considered. She treated him with fierce scorn, laughing loudly at him by way of masking, probably, the heartache she really endured, and on all sides relating her version of the story of their loves, which placed him in a very disadvantageous light. They met only on the stage. They were both servants of the same manager, and compelled to act together. But, in 1747, he became joint patentee with Lacy at Drury-lane, and the fact of her being a member of his company occasioned serious embarrassment to both. Immediate escape was not possible; and her position in the theatre was additionally mortifying from the antagonism of the other actresses, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, and Mrs. Clive, all members of the company, and all claiming the earliest consideration in regard to the performance of what are called "leading parts." "No two women of high rank," writes Tom Davies, "ever hated one another more unreservedly than those great dames of the theatre, Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Woffington. In the green-room, their many bitter conflicts, their frequent interchange of angry looks, and words, and gestures occasioned great diversion. Mrs. Clive was coarse, violent, and very rude; Mrs. Woffington was well bred, seemingly very calm, and at all times mistress of herself. She blunted the sharp speeches of Mrs. Clive by her apparently civil, but keen and sarcastic replies; thus she often threw Clive off her guard by an arch severity, which the warmth of the other could not easily parry."

At the end of the season Mrs. Woffington quitted Garrick's theatre, and accepted an engagement at Covent-garden, where she remained three years. She now was possessed of ample opportunities for the display of her gifts, as an actress of both tragedy and comedy. She was held to be the best Portia and Rosalind of her time; subsequently, as Lady Macbeth, she was ranked next to the famous Mrs. Pritchard. As the heroine of Rowe's tragedy of Lady Jane Grey she commanded extraordinary applause; while the classical beauty of her performance of Andromache and Hermione won general admiration. She had visited Paris, indeed, expressly to witness the representations of the great French actress, Mademoiselle Dumesnil, whose grace of action and skilful elocution had made her famous. As Veturia, in Thomson's play of Coriolanus—Veturia being the mother of the hero—Mrs. Woffington did not hesitate, with a view to the more perfect representation of the character, to paint wrinkles upon her beautiful face and to assume a look of old age. "What other actress would do this?" a critic of the time pointedly inquires. She undertook, at a very short notice, upon Mrs. Cibber falling suddenly ill, to assume her part of Constance in King John. The audience, informed of this change in the cast, seemed overcome with surprise, and remained silent for some minutes. Presently, however, by repeated applause they strove to make amends for their apparent indifference, and to reward the exertions of the accomplished actress, who had come forward so gallantly to aid the management.

It is clear, however, these successes notwithstanding, that the lady's greatest triumphs were in comedy. The critics dwelt with almost cruel persistence upon "her deplorable tragedy voice," and the discord of her declamation. As Calista in The Fair Penitent, it was said that all her merit was comprehended in elegance of figure; "she was a Lady Townley in heroics, and barked out her penitence with as dissonant notes of voice as ever offended a critical ear." As Zara in The Mourning Bride, her figure and deportment were found irreproachable; "but the violent as well as the tender passions grated abominably in her dissonant voice." Her "tragic utterance" is described as "the bane of tender ears;" she "never appeared to less advantage than as Lady Randolph; flat in the calm, and dissonant in the impassioned passages." Yet the same critic has nothing but praise for her representation of such characters as Sylvia, in The Recruiting Officer; Beatrice, in Much Ado about Nothing; and Charlotte, in The Non-Juror. She had studied elocution under Cibber, a pompous actor of an old-fashioned school, who delighted in intoning his speeches, and was fond of what was facetiously called the "Ti-tum-ti" style of delivery. Mrs. Woffington had toiled zealously in this branch of her profession; but the effort to impart music to her utterance probably deprived her eloquence of all nature and pathos, and lent an air of artifice and affectation to her best performances in tragedy.

She quitted Covent-garden in 1751, at the close of the season. She was offended at the names of Quin, Barry, and Mrs. Cibber being printed in letters of unusual size upon the playbills which should have been devoted to the comedies in which she appeared. She felt herself subordinated to them, and slighted accordingly. Moreover, she was too frequently called upon suddenly to act as a stop-gap, when the other players were, or affected to be, too ill to appear. On one occasion "Jane Shore" had been announced; but it was postponed, The Constant Couple being advertised to take its place, when the playbill was half occupied with the names of the tragedians, and with particulars of their future arrangements. At five o'clock Mrs. Woffington sent word to the manager that she was ill, and could not play. Upon her next appearance, she was received with a storm of disapprobation, which she attributed to a conspiracy on the part of the manager's friends. The public, however, had some reason to complain of the many disappointments to which they had been subjected. "Whoever," writes Tate Wilkinson, describing the scene, "is living, and saw her that night, will own that they never beheld any figure half so beautiful since. Her anger gave a glow to her complexion, and added lustre to her eyes. They treated her very rudely, bade her ask pardon, and threw orange-peel. She behaved with great resolution, and treated their rudeness with glorious contempt. She left the stage, was called for, and with infinite persuasion was prevailed upon to return. However, she did; walked forward, and told them she was there ready and willing to perform her character if they chose to permit her; that the decision was theirs—on or off, just as they pleased, it was a matter of indifference to her. The 'ons' had it, and all went smoothly afterwards."

Yet Wilkinson was not a witness especially disposed to favour Mrs. Woffington. Something of a ventriloquist and a mimic by profession, he had roused her ire by his caricatures of her tragic tones. She had exerted herself to prevent his being employed at Covent-garden. Afterwards, in Dublin, he had played Dollalolla, in the burlesque of Tom Thumb, avowedly imitating Mrs. Woffington. "Take me off! A puppy!" she cried, angrily. "And in Dublin, too! If he dare attempt it, he will be stoned to death." But by his own showing his mimicry was received with uproarious laughter.

The two patent theatres being closed to her by her quarrels with both Rich and Garrick, she returned to her old friends in Ireland, who received her very warmly. Sheridan, who had become manager of the Dublin Theatre, agreed with her for one season at four hundred pounds. By appearing only in four of her best parts, she benefited the management to the amount of four thousand pounds. Next season her salary was doubled. She remained with Sheridan until the disastrous close of his management in March, 1754.

It was a time of great political excitement. Dublin was rent by party feeling. There was a supercilious court party; there was a vehement popular party. The players failed to keep friends with both sides. Sheridan had instituted a Dublin Beefsteak Club, in imitation of the more famous London Beefsteak Club, first founded in 1735. It was maintained at his sole expense. The thirty or forty members were, for the most part, noblemen or Members of Parliament. "The gay, volatile, enchanting Woffington," writes Hitchcock in his Irish Stage, "being the only female admitted, was by unanimous consent voted into the chair, which she filled with a grace and ease peculiar to herself." She had frankly avowed that she preferred the company of men to that of women; the latter, she said, talked of nothing but "silks and scandal." The club was without political intention or object, but the public would not think so, and Sheridan incurred great unpopularity. The storm broke out upon the production of a poor tragedy founded upon the Mahomet of Voltaire. The audience applied certain lines to the court party, and required their repetition. Sheridan laid aside the play for a month, but on its next representation a similar disturbance arose. Sheridan would not permit the offensive lines to be repeated. Mrs. Woffington was induced to appear, "to try what influence a fine woman could have upon an enraged multitude;" but in vain. The lady was credited with political sentiments and connections of an unpopular kind. The rioters proceeded forthwith to demolish the theatre, and fully accomplished their object. There was an end of Sheridan's management; of Mrs. Woffington's career in Ireland. She reappeared at Covent-garden in September, 1754, and was received with very hearty applause. Her London admirers had by no means forgotten her.

But her career was now drawing towards its close. On the occasion of her benefit, on the 24th of March, 1757, she had appeared as "the haughty, gallant, gay Lothario" in The Fair Penitent: an injudicious proceeding, for what actress can hope for genuine success as the hero of a tragedy? On the following 3rd of May she was seen upon the stage for the last time. From the beginning of the season, although she had striven hard to fulfil her duty towards the public, her health had failed her. There had been abatement of her wonted high spirits, decline of her marvellous beauty. Wilkinson has described the scene forcibly enough. "I was standing in the wings as Mrs. Woffington, in Rosalind, and Mrs. Vincent, in Celia, were going on the stage in the first act. . . . She went through Rosalind for four acts without my perceiving that she was in the least disordered; but in the fifth act she complained of great indisposition. I offered her my arm, the which she graciously accepted. I thought she looked softened in her manner, and had less of the 'hauteur.' When she came off at the quick change of dress, she again complained of being ill, but got accoutred, and returned to finish the part, and pronounced the epilogue speech: 'If it be true that good wine needs no bush,' &c. But, when arrived at, 'If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards,' &c., her voice broke—she faltered—endeavoured to go on, but could not proceed; then, in a voice of tremor exclaimed, 'O God! O God!' and tottered to the stage-door speechless, where she was caught. The audience of course applauded till she was out of sight, and then sunk into awful looks of astonishment, both young and old, before and behind the curtain, to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favourite principal actress, and who had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of Death, in such a time and place, and in the prime of life." It was thought that she could not survive many hours, but she lingered until the 28th of March in the following year, suffering severely, wrecked and broken, scarcely recognisable as the "lovely Peggy" of the past—the merest shadow of her former self. She had saved money, and was able to bequeath some five thousand pounds to her sister, who had become the Hon. Mrs. Cholmondeley, an eccentric lady, obtaining frequent mention in the Memoirs of Madame D'Arblay. According to O'Keeffe, Mrs. Woffington maintained her mother during her life, and endowed certain almshouses at Teddington. This last statement has been questioned, but the actress's kindness of heart, tenderness and generosity of disposition, are not to be doubted. She had sinned much; her name finds a place in the most scandalous stories of the time. She was an actress, so far as her private life is concerned, quite of the Restoration pattern; and yet she was felt to have well merited the terms of the monody written upon her death by Hoole, the translator of Tasso. He recorded the excellence of her professional life, and continued:

Nor was thy worth to public scenes confined,
Thou knew'st the noblest feelings of the mind;
Thy ears were ever open to distress,
Thy ready hand was ever stretched to bless,
Thy breast humane for each unhappy felt,
Thy heart for others' sorrows prone to melt, &c.

It is to be remembered of her that to the public and to her art she had been faithful ever. She is thus described by Murphy, who knew her well: "Forgive her one female error, and it might fairly be said of her that she was adorned with every virtue; honour, truth, benevolence, and charity were her distinguishing qualities. Her understanding was superior to that of the generality of her sex. Her conversation was in a style of elegance, always pleasing and often instructive. She abounded in wit, but not of that wild sort which breaks out in sudden flashes, often troublesome and impertinent: her judgment restrained her within due bounds. On the stage she displayed her talents in the brightest lustre. Genteel comedy was her province. She possessed a fine figure, great beauty, and every elegant accomplishment." "She had ever her train of admirers," writes Wilkinson; "she possessed wit, vivacity, &c., but never permitted her love of pleasure and conviviality to occasion the least defect in her duty to the public as a performer. . . . She was ever ready at the call of the audience, and, though in the possession of all the first line of characters, yet she never thought it improper or a degradation of her consequence to constantly play the Queen in Hamlet; Lady Anne in Richard the Third; and Lady Percy in Henry the Fourth—parts which are mentioned as insults in the country if offered to a lady of consequence. She also cheerfully acted Hermione or Andromache; Lady Pliant or Lady Touchwood; Lady Sadlife or Lady Dainty; Angelica or Mrs. Frail; and several others alternately, as best suited the interests of her manager." Victor writes of her: "She never disappointed one audience in three winters, either by real or affected illness; and yet I have often seen her on the stage when she ought to have been in her bed." While the historian of the Irish stage contributes his testimony in her favour: "To her honour be it ever remembered, that, whilst in the zenith of her glory, courted and caressed by all ranks and degrees, it made no alteration in her behaviour; she remained the same gay, affable, obliging, good-natured Woffington to everyone around her. . . . Not the lowest performer in the theatre did she refuse to play for: out of twenty-six benefits she acted in twenty-four. . . . Such traits of character must endear the memory of Mrs. Woffington to every lover of the drama."

THE STORY OF THE SUEZ CANAL.

The most picturesque form of struggle, and the one which commands the most sympathy and admiration from the world, is that of the adventurer, in the honest sense of the term, who enters on some forlorn project, which has all the magnificence of a dream, and lives to be successful and triumphant. After being ridiculed, and even reviled as a visionary, and thwarted where even some faint glimmerings of success have appeared, he has still held on his way, supported by a faith and an enthusiasm that seems miraculous. He has seen the years go by, until life itself has been well-nigh spent; his resources and those of others, who have had some half-hearted trust in him, melt away; until, at last, he comes to be set down as an intruder—a disturber of the community at its business, and he is thrust out rudely with Richard's speech, "I'm busy; thou troublest me; I'm not in the vein." But, at last, the turn comes. Success is declared and the end gained. Then is invariably seen the humiliating spectacle of a complacent reception of what may not be rejected, and a smiling adoption of a portion, at least, of the honours. The rebuffs and the scoffs are set to the account of the adventurer's own indiscretion; and the world, it would seem, is too great a personage to be compelled to own to mistakes, or to cry peccavi. Though it welcomes the discovery—the result of so painful a struggle—and greedily turns it to profit, it is ill at ease, as it were, like some great man who has prophesied that some one or something would turn out badly, and whom the event has proved to be signally wrong.

There are but few of these dramatic instances of hope long deferred resulting in final success—the best known being those of the Jacquard loom, and the Argand burner. But first in interest, on account of the splendour and romantic character of the scheme, will always be considered the story of Ferdinand de Lesseps, and the canal which he made across the Isthmus of Suez.

One morning in the month of August, 1854, a French gentleman was engaged in superintending some masons, who were at work adding a story to his house at La Chênaie—a house that had once been occupied by the famous Agnes Sorel. For the last two years he had devoted himself to agriculture and country pursuits. His career would, indeed, seem to have been closed, for he had led a busy, stirring life in foreign countries, having filled the various grades of consulship in Tunis, Egypt, Rotterdam, Malaga, Barcelona; had been minister at Madrid, and, finally, at Rome. He had shown himself a man of energy and purpose, and for his successful exertions at Barcelona, in 1842, to avert a bombardment, had been presented with a gold medal by the resident French, and an address of thanks from the municipality. But his chief experience had been gained in the East, where he had made friends and connections, and, with a Frenchman's sympathy, had thoroughly identified himself with the politics and manners of Egypt. After some five-and-twenty years' service he found that his course at Rome was not approved by his government, on which, in 1849, he resolved, apparently in some disgust, to withdraw from the service and claim his retirement. The name of this gentleman was Count Ferdinand de Lesseps; and, as he was now about fifty years old, it might fairly be concluded that his career was closed, and that, beyond an occasional cast at the game of politics—open to a Frenchman at any age—life did not offer space for any important undertaking. But his eyes and ears were still turned fondly back to the picturesque land of Egypt; and he entertained himself with what could be no more than a dream, or a fabric as baseless—of "piercing" the Isthmus. At the moment almost of his retirement, this project began once more to fill his thoughts; for, indeed, twenty years before, when in Egypt, he had often turned over the scheme, and seen in imagination the waters flowing through the canal, and the ships sailing along. In 1852 he had again recurred to the design, had drawn up a programme which he had translated into Arabic, and took the step of writing to an old friend, the Dutch consul-general, to know what chances there were of its acceptance by Abbas Pasha, then viceroy. The answer was unfavourable. But already the mind of the projector was beginning to be stimulated by obstacles, and to show that fertility of resource which obstacles generated. One of the Fould family was then proposing to establish a bank at Constantinople; and de Lesseps seized the opportunity to have the proposal opened to the Sultan. It was coldly declined, on the ground of its interfering with the prerogative of the viceroy. Seeing that it was hopeless, our projector laid the whole aside for the present, and, as we have seen, turned his thoughts to agriculture. And thus two years passed away.

On that morning, then, of August, 1854, when engaged with the masons, and standing on the roof of Agnes Sorel's house, the post arrived, and the letters were handed up from workman to workman till they reached the proprietor. In one of the newspapers he read the news of the death of Abbas Pasha and of the accession of Mohammed Said, a patron and friend of the old Egypt days. They had been indeed on affectionate and confidential terms. Instantly the scheme was born again in his busy soul, and his teeming brain saw the most momentous result from this change of authority. In a moment he had hurried down the ladder, and was writing congratulations, and a proposal to hurry to Egypt and renew their old acquaintance. In a few weeks came the answer, and the ardent projector had written joyfully to his old friend the Dutch consul that he would be on his way in November, expressing the delight he would have in meeting him again "in our old land in Egypt," but "there was not to be so much as a whisper to any one of the scheme for piercing the Isthmus."

On the 7th of November he landed at Alexandria, and was received with the greatest welcome by the new ruler. The viceroy was on the point of starting on a sort of military promenade to Cairo, and insisted on taking his friend with him. They started; but the judicious Frenchman determined to choose his opportunity, and waited for more than a week before opening his daring plan to his patron. It was when they had halted on their march, on a fine evening, the 15th, that he at last saw the opportunity. The viceroy was in spirits; he took his friend by the hand, which he detained for a moment in his own; then made him sit down beside him in his tent. It was an anxious moment. He felt, as he confessed, that all depended on the way the matter was put before the prince, and that he must succeed in inspiring him with some of his own enthusiasm. He accordingly proceeded to unfold his plan, which he did in a broad fashion, without insisting too much on petty details. He had his Arabian memoir almost by heart, so all the facts were present to his mind. The eastern listened calmly to the end, made some difficulties, heard the answers, and then addressed his eager listener in these words:

"I am satisfied; and I accept your scheme. We'll settle all the details during our journey. But understand that it is settled, and you may count upon me." Delightful assurance for the projector, whose dreams that night must have been of an enchanting kind! This was virtually the "concession" of the great canal.

But already the fair prospect was to be clouded, and at starting, opposition to so daring a scheme came from England, and from Turkey, moved by England. It is certainly not to the credit of England, that from the beginning she should have persistently opposed it; not on the straightforward ground of disliking the scheme, but on the more disingenuous one of its not being feasible. She had so industriously disseminated this idea, that it was assumed that the canal was impracticable. Those wonderful French savants who went with the expedition to Egypt, had announced that there was a difference of level amounting to thirty feet between the two seas, so that the communication would only lead to an inundation or a sort of permanent waterfall. Captain Chesney, passing by in 1830, declared that this was not so; but the delusion was accepted popularly up to 1847, when a commission of three engineers, English, French, and German, made precise levellings, and ascertained that it was a scientific mistake. Robert Stephenson, the English member of the party, pronounced the whole scheme impracticable. Articles in the Edinburgh Review demonstrated with minute and elaborate pains the falsity of the data on which the promoters rested. And a more amusing half-hour's entertainment could not be desired than the perusal of this Edinburgh Review article for January, 1856, in which it is proved triumphantly that the canal must fill up, and that no harbour or pier could be made. The article argued it all out with a formidable array of facts. Lord Palmerston's opposition is well known, but the shower of articles in the leading journal which ridiculed, prophesied, and confuted, are now well-nigh forgotten.

It was first proposed to follow a roundabout route, making two sides of a triangle, with the existing line for the third. One portion of the water-way, from Damietta to Cairo, was supplied by the Nile itself, so there only remained a distance of twenty miles to be dealt with. But the Nile was in itself a difficulty—the irrigation and other works would be all interfered with, and there were enormous problems as to levels, &c. The direct course was therefore adopted. A curious scientific party, known as the Mixed Commission, formed of engineers from all the leading nations, proceeded, at the close of 1855, to make a thorough examination of the question on the spot; and nothing is more creditable to science than the masterly style in which every point was investigated. The result was satisfactory, and it was determined to commence the work. The route chosen was favoured by many advantages: the distance, though ninety miles in length, was already canalised by various lakes, great and small, to the extent of about thirty miles or more. Roughly, the course was as follows: Starting from the Mediterranean, the entrance is found in a strip of sand, from four to five hundred feet wide, and which forms the rim, as it were, of the bowl that holds Lake Menzaleh. Here is Port Said, the gate or doorway of the canal; then, for about thirty miles, is found the great lake just named, where there rises a slight hill, about twenty-five feet high; then a small lake, and then, for about thirty miles, a series of gradually rising hills, culminating in a rather stiff plateau. Beyond the plateau is lake Timseh, about five miles long, where there is the half-way port, Ismailia. Then succeeds another plateau, large basins, known as the Bitter Lakes, extending about twenty miles, while the rest is land up to the Red Sea. These lakes were in some places dry. There were to be no sluices or locks, though these lakes would be greatly enlarged by the admission of the waters.

It would take long to set out the story of the opposition, coldness, and rebuffs which this intrepid projector was now to encounter. His own sovereign was indifferent; but in England the hostility was almost rancorous. It was repeated again, in and out of Parliament, that even if the canal were ever made, it would be no more than a "stagnant ditch;" and this phrase became a favourite one with the wiseacres, who knew nothing and fancied that they understood. Stephenson, in the House of Commons, renewed his condemnation of the whole scheme, and in contemptuous style repeated the favourite phrase "stagnant ditch."

Never faltering, our projector brought out his company, and, after untiring speechifyings, pamphlets, repasts, &c., opened the subscription. Nearly eight millions were found. In 1859 he started with the work. His faithful friend the pasha stood by him gallantly, and supplied him with fellahs by the thousand, according to the custom of forced labour in the country. Unfortunately, within five years his patron died, and the present pasha, who succeeded, had not the same admiration and faith in the projector. He presently took up a hostile attitude, and declined to supply any more forced labour. It is surprising that the blow did not at once wreck the undertaking—for the forced labour was an all-important element in the calculations. But the indomitable de Lesseps was now a force in Europe, and many eyes were following his proceedings with curiosity and sympathy. A man who had done so much against so much was not likely to be repelled by such an obstacle. He appealed to the Emperor Napoleon; and here we see, again, the good fortune that attended the brave adventurer. He was a connection of the Empress—indeed, it has been stated that he was grandson of one of the Scotch Kirkpatricks—and this influence stood him in good stead. Further, he had wisely made the shares of his company small enough to attract the humble investor, and, as they were held largely over the kingdom, the whole country was interested in the scheme. The Emperor dared not disregard such pressure, and, agreeing to act as umpire, made an equitable decision that satisfied both: to the effect that the pasha was to supply as much labour as was necessary, with a re-arrangement of the concession. On this, the enterprise was pursued with fresh energy. The little canal, which was to convey fresh water for the workmen, had been completed; and at last, by the year 1865, a channel had been scraped out about the depth of a respectable duck-pond, and sufficient to float a small boat through. A couple of years more, and it was deep enough to carry a vessel of thirty or forty tons. It seems incredible, but this progress only excited the derision of the leading English newspapers, who talked of "cockle-shells," and who were dull enough not to see that the problem was already solved. It was then insinuated that it was merely a coup de théâtre—a cleverly-arranged trick to "raise the wind," and extract more money. The idea seemed, indeed, to be generally entertained in England that it was no more than the prophesied "stagnant ditch," in which it was contrived to keep some water for show. More money, however, was wanting; and still this Cagliostro seems to have induced his disciples to subscribe without difficulty; and then a system of dredging, carried out on a magnificent and original scale, was introduced. Machines were contrived on the "elevator" principle, which dredged the "stuff" from the bottom, and landed it on the banks direct. Finally, on August 15th, the brilliant scene of the opening took place, in presence of the Empress, who had travelled from Paris for the purpose. The waters were admitted, and the Red and the Mediterranean Seas mingled together. A glorious day for our adventurer!

The cost of this scheme corresponded to its splendour, amounting to nearly nineteen millions sterling, including the charge of interest during the construction. It was a good deal more than double the estimate; but, as we have seen, the expense of paid-for labour had not been included. The time spent had been about sixteen years. Everything had come out as the projector had prophesied—even to the profits, which, as the great Samuel said on another occasion, were "rich, beyond the dreams of avarice." All the prophesies of the ill-wishers and the critics were falsified in the most ludicrous degree. The "silting-up," the "washing" away of the banks, the impossibility of keeping the mouths open; and, above all, the grave statement of the Edinburgh Review, that goods could be unloaded at one side, despatched across the isthmus by rail, and shipped again at the other side, on just as convenient and rapid a system—all these fine-spun scientific arguments have been confuted by the event. The work remains a magnificent success.

The canal might have been about fifteen miles shorter had it been lower down in the Gulf of Pelusium, but the cost and time would have been greater, as there were no lakes in that line. It is narrow, not allowing more than one vessel to proceed at a time; but there are numerous "lie-by" places where vessels can pass each other. This is necessary, as sometimes so many as thirty vessels are in the canal at a time. It will take vessels drawing so much as five-and-twenty feet. The receipts from tolls have been for the first year, in round numbers, 1870, two hundred and six thousand pounds; for 1871, three hundred and fifty-nine thousand pounds, an increase of about forty per cent.; for 1872, six hundred and fifty-six thousand pounds, an increase of about ninety per cent.; for 1873, nine hundred and fifteen thousand pounds, an increase of nearly forty per cent.; for 1874, nine hundred and ninety-four thousand pounds, an increase of about eleven per cent. The increase for the present year seems likely to be about six per cent. Five or six per cent. increase is likely to be about the steady yearly increase, which alone will pay a great portion of the working expenses, reckoned at about a quarter of a million. In a few years the shareholders are likely to have about a million a year to divide among themselves as clear profit. Eight-and-fourpence a ton is the charge.

In conclusion, it may be added that Count de Lesseps, though seventy years of age, has fire in him yet for other schemes as bold. He comes of an adventurous line: his father having attended Napoleon to Egypt, and having actually selected, at his direction, from the Arab chiefs a brave energetic man to become pasha. His choice fell on Mohammed Ali. The present writer, too, has heard, on good authority, that it was another member of this family who brought home despatches from the lost adventurous La Pérouse, having to make his way through the wilds of Siberia amid dangers and extraordinary difficulties.

Now that England is engaged in this great venture, it is to be hoped that some recognition of its bold, rebuffed, and ridiculed projector will be made. An "amende" of some kind is certainly owing, even though it should make the haughty Stratford de Redcliffe move uneasily in his grave.

FISH SOUP.

It is not without considerable trepidation that I proceed to pour, or, rather, ladle out my mind to my brother Britons on the subject of soup. By the great body of Englishmen soup is regarded as a washy, thin, make-believe aliment, good enough for Frenchmen and foreigners generally, but utterly destitute of the power of communicating "stamina"—of helping a man to do a fair day's work. Possibly they are prejudiced, perhaps they are wrong; but yet they have experience on their side. They have been preached to and lectured—perhaps overmuch, just of late—on the necessity of learning the artful French method of making the soup designated "Potiphar" by a popular lecturer; but my artisan friends, who are not entirely wanting in common sense, object to the "pot-au-feu," that it takes a great deal of time, a great deal of fuel, and a great deal of patience, to make a dish of it; and that the dish then "does not amount to much." Perhaps, when carefully weighed in the chemist's balance, a little more nourishment is got out of a piece of beef, when submitted to the soup-making ordeal first and eaten afterwards; but the ordinary Briton observes—somewhat pertinently, by the way—that the soup is not over good, and that the beef requires a "power" of tomato sauce "to get it down." There is no doubt that soup possesses an immense advantage over other forms of food in the readiness with which it is assimilated. The effect of a cup of good soup, administered as a restorative, is immediate, while the sustaining power of a beefsteak is not appreciated for at least an hour; but, in spite of this recommendation—after all, of little value among people who produce the same effect by a glass of sherry or a "sup o' beer"—it will, perhaps, be long before Englishmen are brought to consider soup as anything but a stop-gap, or make-weight, in their system of alimentation. As a matter of fact, attempts to force the dietary of one race of men upon another have invariably proved failures, for the very simple reason that the food of a people is as much a legitimate result of race, climate, and soil, as language or any other habit of life. Without going into the question suggested by Brillat-Savarin, and ably illustrated by the late Mr. Buckle, as to how far the destiny of nations depends upon their food, I may remark that Englishmen, in the olden time, fought and conquered while fed upon beef; that within our own age, English navvies have done the work of two foreigners and a half; and that at the present day English colliers, employed in the German pits, beat the native competitors easily in their "out-put" of coal. Putting all conceit as to men out of the question, these undoubted facts point to the truth that the best-fed man does the best day's work. This is well recognised in the northern and midland counties, where workmen feed royally upon the never-to-be-forgotten "Barnsley mutton-chop," the succulent beefsteak, and that excellent dish known to "Brums," and sundry gourmands, as tripe and cow-heel. It is, therefore, futile to recommend our countrymen to make soup while they can get beefsteaks; mere absurdity to recommend pot-au-feu to a man who can command a feast of tripe and onions. There can be no question as to the comparative sustaining power of the two classes of food; and there is no doubt that, so long as he can get a piece of beef, the Briton cannot do better than broil it, and eat it without vexing himself about soup and other foreign devices. His soul craves for meat. Therefore, let him have it by all means—so long as he can get it. But there is the rub.

Within the memory of many people who would be disgusted at being called old, beef and mutton were comparatively cheap. Shoulder of mutton—a capital joint, if properly carved and supplemented with onion sauce or stewed onions—brought about sixpence halfpenny per pound; while rump-steak could be purchased for tenpence or, at most, a shilling. But we have fallen upon evil times. The shoulder, now, is rarely to be got under elevenpence, and the steak has risen to sixteen—an excellent figure for simplifying butchers' bills—just one penny per ounce—but terrible in assisting to bring up what the late Joseph Hume, M.P., called the "tottle" of the whole. Other meats, excepting pork, have risen in proportion, while wages have recently fallen rapidly, and the great body of workers are therefore shut in between the upper and nether millstones of dear provisions, and low wages. During the great demand for iron, and, consequently, for coal, much rubbish was talked about the extravagance of the miner; but his well-fed critics forget that he had shot up all at once into comparative affluence, and could hardly be expected to make, at once, the best use of a prosperity which has since rapidly dwindled away. Meat, however, remains as dear as in the days when the scarcity of prime beef and mutton was attributed to the suddenly-increased demand from the mining districts, and, while we are awaiting help from Texas and the River Plate, it may go hard with us for a dinner.

I am reading no new homily, propounding no new theory, when I say that English folk have only themselves to thank for scarcity, if they continue to neglect the mine of food buried in the great deep which surrounds our white cliffs. As we sit upon a solid base of coal, so are we surrounded with food on which to employ it. Of the enormous masses of mackerel, herring, and pilchard which visit our shores, we make but the slenderest use. Of dried fish—haddock and herring are alone appreciated by our population; mackerel is almost entirely eaten in a fresh state, and the pilchard is notoriously cured for exportation only. Within the last two hundred years salt, as well as fresh fish, has almost passed out of the national dietary. Perhaps there was a feeling that it was allied to Popery, brass money, and wooden shoes; but, be this as it may, it cannot be denied that the vast majority of Englishmen despise the food cast annually at their door. Salt fish is regarded merely as a breakfast or supper dish—as a whet or as an absorbent. There is no occasion now that we should fall back upon it as an aliment, railways having supplied us with abundant means for ensuring a supply of the fresh material. Poverty of demand is the only excuse for slack supply of this. Within the recollection of the writer it was next to impossible to get a dish of fresh fish in Leeds—a town of immense wealth and enterprise. This difficulty has been got over, but there is yet throughout the northern and midland counties a very poor supply of fish, due principally, if not entirely, to the absence of demand. One of the principal reasons for this is the ignorance of English people of the proper methods of dressing fish. The primitive boil, broil, or fry are the only generally recognised ways of preparing fish as food in England. Even so simple an operation as that of frying a sole is rarely achieved with success; and a limp, flabby, broken-backed creature is served up because the national cookery, lavish in fuel and other accessories, is curiously stingy in the matter of frying butter or lard. A wretched dab of butter is put into the frying-pan with the result already described; whereas, if the fish be allowed to swim in the frying medium—be the same butter, lard, oil, or even dripping, raised to a proper temperature—it comes out deliciously brown, stiff, and crisp. This important point is not a question of extravagance—as the frying medium can be used over and over again—but simply of method, as opposed to ignorant blundering.

French writers declare that fish is made to swim sundry times; firstly in water, then in butter, lastly in wine, and they also add many recipes for making it swim in soup. Fish soup rings oddly enough in the English ear, all too forgetful of our national soup—turtle. I am aware that when I speak of turtle as fish soup, I am liable to be brought to book by the purists who will tell me that the turtle is not a fish, but a chelonian—a reptile, if I will, but no fish. To these fastidious carpers I will reply, after the manner of the Irishman who said that, "any man who wore two clean shirts per week was gentleman enough for fighting purposes," that for soup-making turtle is fish enough for me. The crab, lobster, and crayfish are also shell-fish; but not, strictly speaking, fish at all. Nevertheless I shall include them in my constituents of fish-soup.

As it would occupy at least an entire number of All the Year Round to tell the various methods of preparing that divine soup known as turtle, I reluctantly abandon this succulent part of my subject, with the remark that the English conception of turtle soup has been refined and refined again, until the preparation has become excessively costly. I cannot refrain from noting that this sublimation of the idea of turtle is, in many respects, a drawback, inasmuch as, under present conditions of communication, turtle need not be so enormously expensive as it is. As the world has gone on shrinking in size from day to day, the West Indies have become quite handy, and there appears no particular reason why their immense supply of green turtle should not be made available by our people here at home. At New York green turtle in soups and steaks is a common dish; I have eaten it often at the charge of eighteenpence sterling, when prices were at the highest level, and very good it was; not, of course, the elegant clear turtle of City banquets, but a famous meal, excellent in its way, and containing all the rich properties of the turtle and its humble henchman, the calf's head. In the United States, I may say in passing, turtle is not greatly esteemed, the tiny terrapin enjoying a far higher reputation. In fact, in that happy country the turtle is like the oyster, not an extravagant luxury, but a regular legitimate article of food, nourishing, wholesome, and moderate in cost. Equally good in its way is the bouillabaisse of Marseilles and Normandy—immortalised in Thackeray's charming ballad. This is a thick soup or rather stew, and, when made after the manner of Marseilles, is highly flavoured enough to satisfy the most fastidious gourmand. Yet it is by no means costly. Soles, mullet, pipers or gurnets, plaice and flounders, are cut in pieces and stewed in water with a little oil and an aromatic seasoning of sliced onions, garlic, shalot, parsley, thyme, and bayleaf, salt, allspice, and nutmeg. When the fish is sufficiently cooked it is taken out, and the soup is strained through a napkin, and finished off with a spoonful of powdered saffron. The fish is served in a dish, and the soup in a tureen with toast in attendance. Here we have a complete meal of fish: a highly-spiced soup, toothsome toast, and a variety of meats, for I may add that bouillabaisse is not always made of the same kind of fish. The important point is that flat fish of some kind should preponderate. It should also be borne in mind that a lobster or a crab is no unwelcome addition. To make Normandy bouillabaisse, the proceeding is somewhat different. Instead of oil, butter is used, and the vegetables and herbs employed—sliced onions, garlic, and minced carrots—are put on the fire with the butter, a little nutmeg and salt, and shaken up for five minutes before the fish is put in with water, parsley, thyme, and bayleaf.

The "charge," as a blast-furnace-man would say, consists of a sole cut in pieces, and an equal weight each of turbot and brill, together with a quart of mussels. The subsequent proceedings are similar to those recommended for bouillabaisse Marseillaise. In this case I may again remark that, as a matter of economy, plaice might be substituted for turbot and brill—plaice being very cheap and abundant in this country. When the rich compound bouillabaisse is not required, or only one kind of fish is to be obtained, it may be treated in various ways. A sole soup, with saffron and salt alone for flavouring, and a little butter to strengthen it, is an excellent dish, served as above, fish and soup apart. The mussel, too, a constituent of the bouillabaisse of Normandy, also makes an admirable soup, for about one-eighth the cost of the favourite oyster soup, and with no more trouble. The raw mussels must be cooked in water, with a very little vinegar in it, and a little parsley, sliced onion, and garlic. As the mussels become poached they are taken out of the shells, carefully washed in warm water, and picked quite clean; the liquor in which they were cooked is strained, and the whole added to some fish stock, boiled up and thickened. The fish stock just alluded to is necessary to the confection of most of the fish soups which do not contain flat fish, cod's head, or conger-eel—all of which are too strong in themselves to need the addition of stock. This is very easy to make. M. Jules Gouffé—whose "Livre des Soupes et des Potages" is, I hope, in course of translation by his brother—tells us that nothing is more simple. You are not to use whole fish for this purpose, but mere odds and ends, together with various and sundry vegetables. The latter consist of sliced carrots, onions and shalots, a little garlic, parsley, celery, bayleaf, thyme, and basil. All this, with a lump of butter, is to be stirred in a saucepan, over a brisk fire, till the vegetables turn to a fine mahogany colour. Then are to be added water and a little dry white wine, if you have it (by the white wine spoken of with apparent recklessness by foreign cooks, is meant common country wine, not far removed from vinegar), and trimmings of fish, heads of turbot, and other fish, and the heads and trimmings of soles, from which the sweet firm fillets have been removed, similar trimmings of whiting, odds and ends of gurnet, haddock, or anything else of a finny kind (not herring or mackerel), the (strained) water in which mussels have been boiled, and a lump of sugar. Boiled slowly, strained and clarified, this fish stock is a prime article, of a deep red colour, and forms the base of almost innumerable combinations with fillets, "escalopes," and quenelles of fish previously stewed. In this connection, I may remark that the conger-eel, a despised fish in this country, makes fish stock of amazing strength and consistency—and that fillets of small conger, served with parsley and butter, are no contemptible dish.

It is hardly possible to deal thoroughly with fish soup, without alluding to the famous Russian soup "ouka," albeit this celebrated concoction, like turtle soup, is dear. It is, moreover, hardly a true fish soup, its base being "empotage," or strong meat stock. On this powerful base is placed a superstructure of fillets of sterlet, carp, eels, and perch, quenelles of whiting, and other costly items. It is very good, but in proportion to its goodness, very dear indeed.

Of like character, but higher excellence, is the well-known American soup, "gumbo," made either with fowl or crab, in combination with white stock, and the curious vegetable which gives it a peculiar character. This "okra" is a plant of the mallow family, furnished with long green pods, which, when sliced crosswise, and added to the soup, communicate to it a gelatinous consistency, or body, foreign to that of any other soup I am acquainted with. If I am not mistaken, the dried "okra" can now be obtained in this country, of the Italian warehousmen who make a specialty of American articles.

An excellent Dutch fish—or rather compound—soup is made of white stock and those neglected delicacies, the milts of the herring; and a famous crayfish soup is also made, in the Low Countries, of white stock and the crayfish tails—the heads, claws, and shells being pounded with butter, and melted, to make the crayfish butter for thickening the soup. This toothsome compound is dashed with dice of Dutch cheese, as the vegetable soups, so popular on the Continent, are dashed with grated Parmesan. Cheese in soup may appear absurd to the untravelled Englishman, but I can assure him that all soups, in which the flavour of vegetables predominates, are improved by a "dust" of grated cheese.

The soups known as "bisque" owe their character entirely to this compound butter, which may be made with crayfish, lobster, prawns, or shrimps. As the same method will serve for all, it may simplify matters to describe the crayfish butter. This is prepared by drying the odds and ends and shells in an oven. They are then pounded with butter, and the mixture is put in jars standing in hot water for an hour or so. The result is then squeezed through a napkin into a jar of cold water; the butter is collected as it cools, and is employed to thicken the soup. The base may, if for any ordinary day, be composed of meat stock; but the true Lenten dish is made from the fish stock described above. This is the "soupe maigre," so long misunderstood and laughed at; but, nevertheless, a potent nourisher of thews, sinews, and brain. My brother Englishmen are somewhat unduly apt to laugh at theories and theorists, and would probably shake their sides at the doctrine of a learned friend of mine, who feeds his children on oatmeal porridge, milk, and fish, insisting that from these body, bone, and brain are perfectly recruited. I will therefore quote the result of experience. In the battle of life, where strength of will and quick suppleness of intellect are required, few nations can beat the Hebrew, the Scot, and the Yankee. These three are eaters of porridge, milk, and fish.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LIII.

Castalia was driven home, and walked up the path of the tiny garden in front of Ivy Lodge with a step much like her ordinary one. She went into the drawing-room and looked about her curiously, as if she were a stranger seeing the place for the first time. Then she sat down for a minute, still in her bonnet and shawl. But she got up again quickly from the sofa, holding her hand to her throat as if she were choking, and went out to the garden behind the house, and from thence to the meadows near the river. There was at the bottom of the garden, and outside of it, a miserable, dilapidated wooden shed, euphoniously called a summer-house. There was a worm-eaten wooden bench in it looking towards the Whit, and commanding a view of the wide meadows on the other side of it, of a turn in the river, now lead-coloured beneath a dreary sky, and of the distant spire of Duckwell Church rising beyond the hazy woods of Pudcombe. No one ever entered this summer-house. It was rotting to pieces with damp and decay, and was inhabited by a colony of insects and a toad that squatted in one corner. In this wretched place Castalia sat down, being indeed unable to walk farther, but feeling a sensation of suffocation at the mere thought of returning to the house. She fancied she could not breathe there. A steaming mist was rising from the river and the damp meadows beyond it. The grey clouds seemed to touch the grey horizon. It was cold, and the last brown leaf or two, hanging, as it seemed, by a thread on the boughs of a tree just within sight from the summer-house, twirled, and shook, and shuddered in the slight gusts of wind that arose now and again. There was not a sound to be heard except the mournful lowing of some cattle in a distant field, until all at once a movement of the air brought from Whitford the sound of the old chimes muffled by the heavy atmosphere. There sat Castalia and stared at the river, and the mist, and the brown withered leaves, much as she had stared at the blank yard wall in the office.

"My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me!"

She heard a voice saying these words distinctly. She did not start. She scarcely felt surprise. The direful lamentation was in harmony with all she saw, and heard, and felt.

Again the voice spoke: "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee and were delivered; they trusted in thee and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people!"

Castalia heard, scarcely listening. The words flowed by her like a tune that brings tears to the eyes by mere sympathy with its sad sound.

Presently a man passed before her, walking with an unequal pace—now quick, now slow, now stopping outright. He had his hands clasped at the back of his neck; his head was bent down, and he was talking aloud to himself.

"Aye, there have been such. The lot has fallen upon me. I know it with a sure knowledge. It is borne in upon me with a certainty that pierces through bone and marrow. I am of the number of those that go down to the pit. Why, O Lord—Nay! though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment."

He stopped in his walk; stood still for a second or two, and then turned to pace back again. In so doing he saw Castalia. She also looked full at him, and recognised the Methodist preacher. David Powell went up to her without hesitation. He remembered her at once; and he remembered, too, in a confused way, something of what Mrs. Thimbleby had been recently telling him about dissensions between this woman and her husband; of unhappiness and quarrels; and—what was that the widow had said of young Mrs. Errington being jealous of Rhoda? Ah, yes! He had it all now.

The time had been when David Powell would have had to wrestle hard with indignation against anyone who should have spoken evil of Rhoda. He would have felt a hot, human flush of anger, and would have combated it as a stirring of the unregenerate man within him. But all such feelings were over with him. No ray from the outside world appeared able to pierce the gloom which had gathered thicker and thicker in his own mind, unless it touched his sense of sympathy with suffering. He was still sensitive to that, as certain chemicals are to the light.

He went close up to Castalia, and said, without any preliminary or usual greeting, "You are in affliction. Have you called upon the Lord? Have you cast your burthen upon him? He is a good shepherd. He will carry the weary and footsore of his flock lest they faint by the way and perish utterly."

It was noticeable when he spoke that his voice, which had been of such full sweetness, was now hoarse, and even harsh here and there, like a fine instrument that has been jarred. This did not seem to be altogether due to physical causes; for there still came out of his mouth, every now and then, a tone that was exquisitely musical. But the discord seemed to be in the spirit that moved the voice, and could not guide it with complete freedom and mastery.

Castalia shook her head impatiently, and turned her eyes away from him. But she did not do so with any of her old hauteur and intimation of the vast distance which separated her from her humbler fellow-creatures. Pain of mind had familiarised her with the conception that she held her humanity in common with a very heterogeneous multitude. Had Powell been a sleek, smug personage like Brother Jackson, veiling profound self-complacency under the technical announcement of himself as a miserable sinner, she might have turned from him in disgust. As it was, she felt merely the unwillingness to be disturbed, of a creature in whom the numbness of apathy has succeeded to acute anguish. She wanted to be rid of him. He looked at her with the yearning pity which was so fundamental a part of his nature. "Pray!" he said, clasping his hands together. "Go to your Father, which is in Heaven, and He shall give you rest. Oh, God loves you—He loves you!"

"No one loves me," returned Castalia, with white rigid lips. Then she got up from the bench, and went back into her own garden and into the house, with the air of a person walking in sleep.

Powell looked after her sadly. "If she would but pray!" he murmured. "I would pray for her. I would wrestle with the Lord on her behalf. But—of late I have feared more and more that my prayers are not acceptable; that my voice is an abomination to the Lord."

He resumed his walk along the river bank, speaking aloud, and gesticulating to himself as he went.

Meanwhile, Castalia wandered about her own house "like a ghost," as the servants said. She went from the little dining-room to the drawing-room, and then she painfully mounted the steep staircase to her bed-room, opened the door of her husband's little dressing-closet, shut it again, and went downstairs once more. She could not sit still; she could not read; she could not even think. She could only suffer, and move about restlessly, as if with a dim instinctive idea of escaping from her suffering. Presently she began to open the drawers of a little toy cabinet in the drawing-room, and examine their contents, as if she had never seen them before. From that she went to a window-seat, made hollow, and with a cushioned lid, so that it served as a seat and a box, and began to rummage among its contents. These consisted chiefly of valueless scraps, odds and ends, put there to be hidden and out of the way. Among them were some of poor Mrs. Errington's wedding-presents to her son and daughter-in-law. Castalia's maid, Slater, had unceremoniously consigned these to oblivion, together with a few other old-fashioned articles, under the generic name of "rubbish." There was a pair of hand-screens elaborately embroidered in silk, very faded and out of date. Mrs. Errington declared them to be the work of her grand-aunt, the beautiful Miss Jacintha Ancram, who made such a great match, and became a marchioness. There was an ancient carved ivory fan, yellow with age, brought by a cadet of the house of Ancram from India, as a present to some forgotten sweetheart. There was a little cardboard-box, covered with fragments of raised rice-paper, arranged in a pattern. This was the work of Mrs. Errington's own hands in her school-girl days, and was of the kind called then, if I mistake not, "filagree work." Castalia took these and other things out of the window-seat, and examined them and put them back, one by one, moving exactly like an automaton figure that had been wound up to perform those motions. When she came to the filagree box, she opened that too. There was a Tonquin bean in it, filling the box with its faint sweet odour. There was a pair of gold buckles, that seemed to be attenuated with age; and a garnet-brooch, with one or two stones missing. And then at the bottom of the box was something flat, wrapped in silver paper. She unwrapped it and looked at it.

It was a water-colour drawing done by Algernon immediately on his return from Llanryddan, in the first flush of his love-making, and represented himself and Rhoda standing side by side in front of the little cottage where they had lodged there. Algernon had given himself pinker cheeks, bluer eyes, and more amber-coloured hair than nature had endowed him with. Rhoda was equally over-tinted. There was no merit in the drawing, which was stiff and school-boyish, but the very exaggerations of form and colour emphasised the likeness in a way not to be mistaken.

Castalia trembled from head to foot as she looked on the two rosy simpering faces. A curious ripple or tremor ran over her body, such as may be observed in persons recovering consciousness after a swoon. She tore the drawing into small fragments. Her teeth were set. Her eyes glared. She looked like a murderess. She trod the scattered bits into the carpet with her heel. Then, as if with an afterthought, she swept them contemptuously into the bright steel shovel, and threw them into the fire, and stood and watched them blaze and smoulder. After that she wrapped her shawl more tightly round her—she had forgotten to remove either it or her bonnet on coming in—and went out at the front door, and walked straight into Whitford, and to Jonathan Maxfield's house.

She asked for "the master." The old man was at home, in the little parlour, and Sally showed Mrs. Errington into the room almost without the ceremony of tapping with her knuckles at the door, and then made off to the kitchen to tell Mrs. Grimshaw. The lady's face had scared her.

Old Max was sitting near the dull fire which burned in the grate. The big Bible, his constant companion now, lay open on the table. But he had not been devoting his attention to that solely. He had had a large old-fashioned wooden desk brought down from his own room, and had been fingering the papers in it, reading some, and merely glancing at the outside folds of others. He now looked up at Castalia without recognising her.

"What is your business with me?" he asked, peering at her in perplexity.

"I've come to speak to you——" began Castalia; and, at the first sound of her voice, Maxfield recognised her. He remembered the only visit she had paid him previously, when she came to beg that Rhoda might be allowed to visit her. She had taken a great fancy to his pretty Rhoda, this skinny, yellow-faced, fine lady. Ha! Well, she might show what civilities she pleased to Rhoda. No objection to that. Indeed, it was a proceeding to be encouraged, seeing that it probably caused a good deal of discomfort and embarrassment to Algernon! So he gave a little nod, meant to be courteous, and said, "Oh, I didn't just know you at first. Won't you be seated?"

Castalia refused by a gesture, and stood still opposite to him with one hand on the table, apparently in some embarrassment how to begin. Then it flashed on old Max that this "Honourable Missis," as he called her, had probably come to thank him, and found it not altogether easy to do so. But what could Castalia have to thank him for? This: Rhoda had so implored her father to relieve Algernon from his anxiety about the bills, that at length the old man had said with a chuckle, "Tell you what, Rhoda, I'll hand 'em over to Mr. Diamond, and maybe he will give them to you as a wedding-present if he gets the school. And then you can do what you like with 'em. My gentleman won't be above taking a present from you or your husband. I've seen what meanness he can do and what dirt he can swallow, and not even make a wry face over it! Aye, dirt as would turn many a poor labouring man's stomach."

Rhoda, upon this, had consulted Matthew Diamond, and had not found it difficult to make him agree with her wish to give up the bills to Algernon. Indeed, although he had almost come to old Max's opinion of his former pupil, he would not for the world have behaved so as to make Rhoda suppose that he bore him a grudge. Rhoda's errand to the post-office that afternoon had been to bring Algernon this comforting news. She had taken care not to tell her father of Mrs. Algernon's behaviour, but had come home and cried a little quietly in her own room, and kept her tears and the cause of them to herself. Therefore it was that Jonathan Maxfield supposed the fine lady to have come to thank him for his magnanimity on behalf of her absent husband, and he was already preparing to give her "a dose," as he phrased it, and to spare her no item of Rhoda's prosperity, and wealth, and good prospects in the world.

Castalia remained leaning with one hand on the table, and did not continue her speech during the second or two in which these thoughts and intentions were passing through old Maxfield's brain. But it was by no means that she hesitated from embarrassment or lack of words: rather the words crowded to her lips too quickly and fiercely for utterance.

"I've come to speak to you about your daughter," she said at length.

"Aye, aye. Miss Maxfield's a bit of a friend o' yours. Miss Maxfield's allus been very kind to all the fam'ly ever since we've known 'em. But you'd best be seated."

"They say you are an honest, decent man," Castalia went on, neither seating herself nor noticing the invitation to do so. "It may be so. I am willing to believe it. But, if so, you are grossly deceived, cheated, and played upon by that vile girl."

Maxfield brought his two clenched fists heavily down on the table, and half raised himself in his chair. "Stop!" said he. "Who are you talking of?"

"You may believe me. I tell you I have watched—I have seen. She was in love with my husband years ago. She used every art to catch him. And now—now that he is married, she receives secret visits from him. Do you know that he came at night—ten o'clock at night—to your house when you were away? She goes to the post-office slily to see him. I caught her there this morning leaving a private message for him with the clerk! Is that decent? Is it what you wish? Do you sanction it? She writes to him. She has turned his heart against me. He schemes to keep me out of the office. I know why now. Oh yes; I am not the blind dupe they think for. She has made him more cruel, more wicked to me than I could have imagined any man could be. My heart is broken. But as true as there is a God in Heaven I'll have amends made to me. She shall beg my pardon on her knees. And you had better look to it, if you don't want her character to be torn to pieces by every foul tongue in this town. I have borne enough. Keep her at home. Keep her from decoying other women's husbands, I warn you——"

Maxfield, who had been struggling to reach the bell, pulled it so violently that the wire was broken. At the peal Betty Grimshaw came running in, terrified. "Mercy, brother-in-law!" she cried. "What is it?"

"Get the police," gasped old Max, as if he were choking. "Send some one for a policeman, to turn that mad quean out of my house. She's not fit for a decent house. She's—she's—— Oh, but you shall repent this! I'll sell you up, every stick of trumpery in the place. You audacious Jezebel! Turn her out of doors, I say! Do you hear me?"

Betty and the servant stood white and quivering, looking from the old man unable to rise from his chair without help, and the lady who stood opposite to him, glaring with a Medusa face. Neither of the two frightened women stirred hand or foot to fulfil the master's behest. But Castalia relieved them from any perplexity on that score, at least, by voluntarily turning to leave the room. In the doorway she met Rhoda, who had run downstairs in alarm at the violent pealing of the bell. Castalia drew herself suddenly aside, as though something unspeakably loathsome stood in her path, held her dress away from any passing contact with the amazed girl, and rushed out of the house.

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK II. CHAPTER I. AUDREY'S NARRATIVE—THE DINGLE HOUSE.

"We lived—my father, my brother Griffith, and I—at the Dingle House, a little distance out of Wrottesley, on the northern road. The Dingle House was near enough to the town to have come in for some of its smoke and some of its noise, only that the road wound picturesquely and steeply down between two banks, and took a sudden bend just above our gate, which twisted us right away from the towny side of the locality, while the height above it gave a pleasant nestling aspect to our home.

"Wrottesley was a nice old-fashioned country town; very dull, I daresay, according to the notions of people who merely passed through it, and had big bustling standards of comparison in their minds whereby to measure it. But I liked it very much always, and I like it still. I can get everything I want at the Wrottesley shops, and if I could not, the shop-people would send for anything for me; and I like to be known in the place I live in. It secures one politeness and consideration; and though it may be narrow-minded to say so, I object to feeling that I am only a drop in an ocean, only a mite in a multitude—sensations which I experience painfully in all big cities, and especially in London. I have a great many reasons for liking Wrottesley beside the shops and the politeness, but I shall let them come out by degrees, and the very best and greatest reason of all I mean to reserve until the last.

"I have never seen anything quite like the Dingle House, though I have seen much grander places, and if an artist were to paint a picture of it, or a real author was to write a description of it, you would not think anything of it at all. It is a mere cottage-kind of house, with a little lawn and a little orchard set rather prettily close by a gentle hill-side; not so pretentious as the places which people call villas nowadays, and comfortable for a cottage—but merely that.

"There are hundreds of thousands like it scattered all over England; but the Dingle House has no fellow to my fancy; and I believe that when I come to die—when I shall not any longer see with my eyes, or hear with my ears, but in some strange way, independent of the body—the red brick gable smothered in green leaves, the tall swaying trees with the rooks' nests in their topmost boughs, the beehives on the bench in the orchard, and the green gate in the paling, which swung and clicked with a peculiar sound when a familiar hand pushed it open, will come back to my mind's vision.

"It was a long, low, irregular house, with a peaked roof, deep window-sills, and tiled passages; a house full of nooks and corners, very sunny and very shady; with a green porch covered with clematis, jessamine, and roses, and a pigeon-house at the opposite end. The little lawn boasted some beautiful trees, especially sycamores and beeches, and its smooth green sward stretched away from the front windows, which looked out of ivy frames, to the high brick wall with espalier apple, pear, and plum trees on its inner side, which divided our little demesne from the high road. I use the grand-sounding word advisedly; the Dingle House and the ground it stood upon belonged to my father, and constituted pretty nearly all that was left of property which had once been considerable. Considerable, I mean to say, for an unpretending gentleman, of good but not distinguished birth, and no overwhelmingly onerous social obligations.

"The Dingle House, however, had not come to my father by inheritance; for he was a Welshman, and all the land which he was born to inherit lay within the borders of the Principality, where the Dwarris family had been known almost as long and as familiarly as Snowdon. The Dingle House had come into his possession by purchase, and the purchase had been incited by a woman's fancy—my mother's. She saw and fancied the pretty little place, when she and my father, while making a discreet and limited honeymoon tour, after the unambitious fashion of their day, had halted awhile at Wrottesley. The bridegroom was rich enough to gratify his bride's fancy—there was capital fishing in the neighbourhood, and my father liked the sport—and the Dingle House was purchased then and there; but I suppose nothing could have seemed less likely to either, than that they should both end their days within its peaceful walls.

"Unfortunately—I suppose I am bound to say unfortunately, though I think we were very happy people in our quiet way—the Dingle House was not the only fancy purchase which my father made, and it was by far the wisest. I never knew exactly how it came about, and I don't think Griffith ever knew exactly either, but my father became 'reduced.' That was the word, I recollect, which Mrs. Frost, our 'housekeeper,' as she was punctiliously called, used, on the rare occasions when she admitted that the Dwarris family was no longer what it had been in point of property, though, 'thank God,' she used to say, with a fervour which rendered the ejaculation really pious, 'filthy lucre can't neither make nor mar the Dwarrises.' Mrs. Frost's sound feudal sentiments were as surprising as they were gratifying, for she was not a retainer, nor even a Welshwoman; she was a cockney pur sang, and yet her notions of the grandeur of the Dwarrises were Caleb-Balderstonian in their magnitude. 'Reduced' was the word; 'ruined' she would never have admitted; and, indeed, there was no ruin in the case, at least to Griffith's perception or mine. But while Griffith was still a child, and I was hardly more than a baby, our father, who was (as we knew afterwards) of a trusting, sanguine, speculative turn of mind, and (as he told us afterwards, when we found it rather difficult to believe him), extravagant in his habits, got into debt and difficulty. He resorted to expedients in order to extricate himself from those entanglements which I have heard him compare, selecting his illustration from the only sport he cared for, to the twisting of a fish-hook in one's finger in order to get it out. I never learned the exact particulars of those expedients; their results were, briefly, the piecemeal parting with his Welsh property, and the gradual reduction of his fortune to an income which barely sufficed to enable him to live quietly at the Dingle House, and devote a modest sum to the education of my brother Griffith and myself.

"We never knew anything personally, and we knew very little by report, of our mother's family. We believed, on very vague evidence, for we could not have defined it, that they had been much annoyed by our father's 'reduction,' and the collapse of the 'good' marriage which my mother's had been supposed to be; and that they had retreated from all risk of contact with the 'reduced.' This was all we knew, and more than we cared about, for my brother Griffith and I could not imagine that people who found fault with our father could be nice people—we were much happier and better without them. Besides these sound and excellent sentiments, there existed a reasonable cause of severance between us and my mother's relatives; that reason was that our mother had long been dead, when the time came at which it was natural that we should try to ascertain our relations with the world outside the Dingle House.

"Griffith could remember our mother; I could not. How much and how often I envied him that priceless privilege! Not when I was a child, of course, not even when I was a very young girl; but every hour after I began to learn life's lessons by heart, to see with the just vision of womanhood, to discern the real value of the gifts which the tempters on either side of the pathway of life hold out to lure the eyes and the soul; then, with all my might, I envied my brother the talisman he carried in his breast—the memory of a mother. I was very happy; I was well cared for; I had a safe and love-sanctified home; but I never saw a young girl with her mother, without feeling as one might feel on beholding a creature like oneself in all other respects, but endowed with a wonderful additional sense, conferring faculties and enjoyment hardly within the scope of one's imagination. I never saw a young girl with her mother, however poor she might be in all other possession, without regarding her as rich in owning the one absolutely perfect, faultlessly true, entirely disinterested, and immutable love which exists beneath heaven, and outside the divine.

"My brother was ten years old when our mother died, but I was only four, and had no remembrance at all of her. He could criticise the portrait which hung in our father's room, and which represented a beautiful young woman, with soft brown eyes and chestnut hair, a mouth like a rosebud, and a cheek like a peach; he could tell me in what particulars it resembled, in what others it failed to resemble, the original; I could only wonder at and worship it. While I was a child it was a frequent source of consideration to me how my father thought and felt about my mother. I had a notion that he had loved her very much, that she had been very happy; and yet she was gone, and he was left alone—at least with only us—but he was contented enough! I remember that I propounded this difficulty to Mrs. Frost once on a time, and she met it in a manner which administered a rather strong dose of truth to an imaginative child, as I was then.

"'Don't you go a fancyin', Miss Audrey,' were her words of wisdom, 'that anybody can't bear what he's got to bear in this world; and that there's anything that ain't to be got over; for you'll find out your mistake, my dear, some day; and you'd much better start patient, and make up your mind to ups and downs. Your pa was the best of husbands, and your ma was the best of wives—a pair of angels couldn't be better nor dearer than them two. But it wasn't to last—and I've mostly remarked it don't when both parties is like them—and your pa had to bear his fate, just as everybody's got to bear theirs.'

"Mrs. Frost was brushing my hair, with an uncongenial brush, when she administered to me this moral lesson, and somehow she seemed to knock and rasp it into my youthful head. When I had been tucked up for the night, and recommended to go to sleep on the instant, I could not escape from a grim consciousness that a new view of things had been presented to me; that, so to speak, my wings had been clipped. I had begun my life with a fine store of self-will and a cheerful confidence in my own way; but here was a picture presented to me of something infinitely stronger than my will, and presumably antagonistic to my way, which might be lurking about ever so near me, and could not be conquered, so must just be borne.

"I suppose the first time a child's mind has the possibilities of the future presented to it, and conceives a notion of the inexorable law of human life, is always an epoch in the existence of that human being; but I doubt whether it is often so consciously important as in mine.

"My father was not a taciturn man by any means, and there was not a touch of moroseness in his character; but he had not very much to say to a little girl, and I had not very much to say to him. He was exceedingly kind and indulgent, and very patient with me, and I loved him, not so well as I loved Griffith, and the image of my mother which I summoned up out of my fancy, but next in order to those two. He was a handsome, grave, quiet-mannered man, with something in his air and his ways which I have since learned to associate with failure in a general sense. He was a great reader, and a diligent correspondent, on certain branches of natural history, with some scientific societies whose polysyllabic titles I never mastered; very fond of fishing, and methodical about it; completely indifferent to general society, and deeply attached to Griffith, of whom he made a companion from the time of our mother's death.

"We three lived together at the Dingle House, and a very happy life it was. It had for Griffith and me the school-days which no one can escape; but they were differently allotted, and I rather envied Griffith the form they took in his case, for he went to school—a day-school—for nothing would have induced our father to be without his son in the evenings; while I, after the fashion of the time and place, had a visiting governess. How much I should have liked to go to school with Griffith! With what pleasure I listened to all his stories of the masters and the boys, the games, the scrapes, and the adventures! I had even a surreptitious flirtation or two, while I was yet of tender years, with certain of his schoolfellows, whose names I have now forgotten, chiefly carried on in church and during impressive bits of the service, when the authorities were unusually devout. The school was a private one, high-class, and expensive for us. The 'best' people in Wrottesley sent their sons to Mr. Pelham's. My father was energetic enough about Griffith's education, and my brother took kindly to his studies. They were happy years, during which Griffith used to go to Mr. Pelham's every morning, and return every evening to be very kind and companionable with his little sister, and to talk with our father in a fashion which was, I fancy, graver and more 'grown up' than was customary at his age.

"Griffith must have been about eighteen and I about twelve, when I began to adore the military. This was certainly precocious; but then, there were predisposing causes. I do not remember how it was that I either formed for myself, or was led to believe that my father entertained it, the notion that my brother was to go into the army. I continued to cherish this notion for a year or two, and it gave me the greatest delight. That he would have 'to be something'—by which vague term I conveyed to myself the notion of his earning a livelihood, and, in a distant kind of way, entertained the prospect of his ceasing to live with my father and myself at the Dingle House—I knew; and how could he possibly be anything more delightful and imposing than an officer in the army? However exalted might be Mrs. Frost's estimate of the claims and the dignity of the Dwarrises, she could not hold the former to be slighted, or the latter impaired, by Griffith's adoption of the noble profession of arms.

"As I have previously remarked, I adored the military. I believed the world could produce nothing more splendid than the officers, whom I saw riding in and out of the town. The only improvement in their appearance I could have conceived possible would have been that they should wear their lovely uniforms all day long. They were glorified beings in my eyes; and, as I had a strong liking for story-books, and the military hero was in his apogee in the literature of fiction in my early days, I found confirmation for my fancy in my reading. How delightful it would be to see Griffith in a blue coat with a red sash, and a helmet held on by a strap, which should mark off the brown and the white along the side of his cheek, with that manly streak which I regarded as so peculiarly fascinating. Griffith was quite as tall as Captain Simcox, and much broader across the shoulders; and as for Lieutenant Larkin, I was sure his scales would not come much above Griffith's elbow. What would Griffith be, when the captain and the lieutenant, who were decidedly inferior to him in personal appearance, looked so heavenly in their uniforms? The gallant officers in question did not visit at the Dingle House. I had no opportunity of seeing them, so to speak, off parade; there was nothing to correct my impressions, and my imagination was unchecked.

"A good deal of the absurdity of my notions and aspirations in my early teen-time was inspired by the example and confidences of the elderly young lady to whom the care of my education was confided, in the capacity of visiting governess. Miss Minnie Kellett was the daughter of a respectable widow, who kept a fancy shop in the town of Wrottesley—the sort of shop which, nowadays, would be called an 'emporium,' but which, though then simply a shop, was not in the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker category. Mrs. Kellett was an object of interest to people of the town, and even of the county. She used to receive their visits, which were kindly, and, if they were a little patronising, the old lady liked the patronage. Her family had belonged to the numerous and unpleasant community of those who have 'seen better days.' Miss Minnie was of a sentimental turn, wore curls, had light eyes, and a lisp. I do not think there was any particular harm in her beyond the particular harm of setting up, on the score of family dignity and misfortunes, for teaching, to which she was not competent; but I have noticed that this is by no means a rare proceeding, even in much later days. Women who never learned anything thoroughly, and never contemplated the art of teaching as a separate subject for study at all, will embark in the profession with a serene confidence, which they would not import into the duties of a cook or a housemaid. I do not know that Miss Minnie Kellett's was an extreme case of ignorance; but I suspect that if I had not been naturally fond of reading, and my father and Griffith had not taken some pains to cultivate and direct my taste, I should have known just the next to nothing, which was considered enough for girls not so very many years ago.

"If my admiration of the military had not been sufficiently strong and silly, it would have been stimulated to the right pitch by Miss Minnie. As it was, our common nonsense on this point was a bond of union far closer than that furnished by grammars and geographies, Cramer's Exercises for the Pianoforte, and Berlin-wool work. Miss Minnie was a link between my completely imaginary adoration of these charming creatures, and the actual world in which they lived; for she had endless small confidences to make to me concerning their admiration of and attentions to herself, which it never occurred to me to receive otherwise than with undoubting faith.

"That Griffith was to go into the army was a settled point between Miss Minnie and me. We had not the remotest notion of how it was to be done, or of what it would mean, supposing it had been done; but there were enchanting visions connected with it, including rapid promotion and a number of 'brothers-in-arms,' of splendid appearance and chivalrous manners, who were to be introduced to me, and who would inevitably fall violently in love with me. I was to permit my heart to 'speak' in favour of the handsomest and bravest of the number. I remember, in particular, when I look back to the pleasant and not very blamable absurdity of those days, that the hero of my choice was to have got his fighting over beforehand; that he was to bring me ready-gathered laurels; and that Miss Minnie and I differed about his scars. She liked the G. P. R. James' style of wound, the 'cicatrice which betrayed how the bronzed cheek had been laid open by a desperate cut from a sabre;' while I thought a mark on the forehead, or a slight scar on the chin, not sufficient to injure its beauty, or so insignificant as to be mistaken for an accident in shaving, would wisely combine the demands of romance with the preservation of appearance.

"I was just fifteen, if I remember rightly, and in the noontide of nonsense of this kind, when a severe blow was struck at my youthful romance by Mrs. Frost. I had been looking out of the window of my room, which commanded a prospect of the high road as far as the bend I have already mentioned, and I had seen Captain Simcox and Lieutenant Larkin pass by on horseback. Frost was in the room, and I could not forbear from commenting on the majesty of the spectacle to her, though she was perfectly unsympathising, and never lost an opportunity of professing that she had 'no opinion of the military'—meaning that she had a bad one.

"'How delightful it would be to see Griffith just like them?' I went on enthusiastically. 'I do long to see him in a beautiful uniform, waving his sword.'

"'Which you won't, Miss Audrey,' said Frost, testily, 'not until such time as bankers wears red coats, and gives out the money on sword-blades, in place of shovels which always has been. No, no, master ain't no such fool as to let Master Griffith go a' hollerin' himself hoarse to country bumpkins at home, or getting his brains blowed out abroad, and payin' dear for the honour and glory of doin' of it. Thank mercy, master knows a deal better than that, which you ought to be ashamed of yourself for wishin' of it, Miss Audrey.'

"'What do you mean, Frosty?' I asked. 'Who says anything about banks, and why can't Griffith be an officer?'

"'Your pa and Master Griffith has been arrangin' of it, my dear, and a good thing too. Master told me about it this morning, and I'm as glad as glad. It's time you got some sense, Miss Audrey, and learned as nothing can't be done without money, and as your pa is anything but well off.'

"I made no reply. The testiness of the dear old woman's manner, her unusual crossness to myself, her vehement tone, made me suspect she liked the prospect she had announced so vaguely, as little as she expected me to like it. But I wanted to know more, and I coaxed her.

"'Where is Griffith going to be a banker, Frosty? Do tell me all about it? I won't say anything to vex papa.'

"'He isn't goin' to be a banker nowhere, Miss Audrey. Bankers ain't made so easy as all that. He's going into Kindersley's, and a good thing too. Many a man as has died rich begun that way, and I dare-say Master Griffith 'll die rich some day—which he wouldn't, sure and certain, in the millinterry.'

"I did not want to hear about Griffith's dying, rich or otherwise, but Frosty was not to be induced to talk in any way but her own.

"'Mr. Kindersley's been takin' a interest in Master Griffith, along o' his pullin' Master Kindersley out of the river, when he got pushed into it that time when the schoolboys got a' fightin' together down by the broad bridge, and a' promptin' him in his lessons, which Master Kindersley ain't clever, they do say, and that's how it come about.'

"I asked no more questions of Mrs. Frost. The news she had told me sobered me, and made from that hour a difference in me.

"I had occasionally talked to my brother about my ambition for him. He had generally laughed and put me off; but once he had said, rather sadly, 'Where's the money to come from, child?' As I had not the least notion how to meet this objection, I did not meet it, and I did not remember it. I knew nothing practically about my father's affairs, and I had but little opportunity of comparing our circumstances with those of other people.

"It was not until long afterwards that I learned how much it cost my brother to accept the position, which the full revelation of my father's circumstances forced upon him about this time. He, too, had had his own ambition, his own visions of a career; and though they differed as widely from mine, as the realities of life differed from my girlish notions of them, they were as completely beyond realisation. I may as well record them here, among the things that never were, and the things of the past. While I was elevating my brother in my silly fancy to the magnificent level of Captain Simcox and Lieutenant Larkin, he was indulging in dreams of going to a university, and embracing the laborious, concentrated life of a scholar. He believed there might be means enough to give him his career of predilection, provided he should steadily resist its temptations, and brave the mortifications which a poor man must encounter; but the vision vanished one day, on which our father explained to him that, a last effort to retrieve a former heavy loss having resulted in fresh disaster, he not only could not give his son the means of going to a university, under even the most modest auspices, but he should have to leave Griffith, at his own death, charged with the obligation of providing for me.

"When Griffith told me all about this, a long time afterwards, I could not help thinking that, just at the period when the truth was told him, I was anything but a person for whom a young man might fairly have been expected to make a great sacrifice cheerfully. I remember, with tolerable distinctness, what my personal appearance was at that time, and I think I can describe my mental characteristics also with accuracy.

"At fifteen I was not pretty, though I was very good-looking at five-and-twenty. I had an awkward figure and a sallow face, with nothing attractive about it except the mouth and eyes, which latter were large, dark, and brilliant. I was a tall, strong, active girl, with the untidy, unconventional ways of a girl who has lacked a mother's care in all the minor discipline of habit and observance; and as I had unbroken health, and was therefore not a source of any of the disquiet and anxiety which teach careless men the solicitude and the watchfulness of women, I had been permitted to have my own way in all things appertaining to the government of my life.

"I had plenty of fun in me, and a good temper. I was idle about my studies, except those which had an imaginative side to them—such as history and biography. The only touch of romance in me was the worldly and showy kind, without any tendency to the sentimental. I liked books—poetry, plays, and novels best, though I had settled habits of solid reading too. I liked flowers, but not the cultivation of them. I liked animals, but not the trouble of them; I could not have been trusted not to neglect them. I liked giving away things I did not want to the poor, but I had not patience with them. I was very fond of 'Frosty,' because she saved me from all responsibility and trouble about the house, and, notwithstanding her sharp tongue, indulged me very thoroughly. I loved my father, but I was content to love him without understanding him, and Griffith I worshipped and worried.

"However well or ill I knew myself at that time, or however I may have changed since then, and corrected my impressions respecting myself, other people, and things in general, one fact, which always existed, has never been otherwise than cloudlessly clear to my perception. It is that my brother Griffith was 'worth a dozen of me.'"

HUMAN LONGEVITY.

WHETHER they have honoured their fathers and mothers or not, all human beings—except suicides—wish that their days may be long in the land, and even eventual suicides, before the morbid disposition, or the crushing events, which tempted them to self-destruction, came on—even they would shrink, like the rest of their fellow-creatures, from any untimely shortening of their lives. The wonder, therefore, is, not that there should be so many books and treatises indicating the way to insure long life, but that there should exist so few; above all, so few seriously and conscientiously written, and not marked with the stamp of charlatanism. For of all the branches of natural history, the hygiene of the human race is the most useful, and certainly the most interesting.

One might be deterred from increasing the number of essays on this subject, by observing that the fate of our predecessors in that line is not particularly encouraging. No inflexible rule, as we shall see, can be laid down in the matter of longevity; and many of those who have taken the greatest pains to live long, or to instruct others how to do so, have failed to show, in their own persons, the efficacy of their instructions. Nobody as yet has been able to say, "I will live a hundred years and more; note the way in which I manage it." On the contrary, many have reached their ninetieth or their hundredth years under circumstances which, most people would say, were anything but favourable to length of days.

The late Professor Flourens, perpetual secretary of the Académie des Sciences, &c., a real savant, unsuspected of quackery, who believed the normal life of man to be two hundred years, within a trifle, got but little beyond the quarter of that period. Absorbed in the case of Luigi Cornaro, a dyspeptic Italian, who exemplified the saying that it is the creaking gate which hangs the longest, he had such faith in abstinence as a sure means of longevity, that he may be believed to have died of insufficient nourishment. For what is life but strength, which cannot be sustained without adequate, sometimes liberal, supplies of food and drink? What produces weakness more surely than starvation? And what is natural (distinguished from violent or sudden) death, but the acme of weakness, or strength dwindled down to infinitesimal smallness? And that was all poor Professor Flourens gained by making his dinner off an egg-yolk or a biscuit. Were an inquest held on such a death, "Serves him right" would be the verdict of a popular jury. Le Docteur P. Foissac, Médecin en chef, &c., whose excellent book on "La Longévité Humaine; ou, l'Art de Conserver la Santé et de Prolonger la Vie," is the cause of this article having been written,—Dr. Foissac, who only allows us a hundred years, and whose mode of treatment is less severe than that of Flourens, is, we hope, still surviving at the date of our present publication. And as no man can be pronounced fortunate before his death, so none can be warranted as centenarians until they are alive, well or ill, with or without their faculties, in their hundred and odds.

"If you want to know how long you will live," said an eminent English practitioner, "go and consult the grave-stones of your ancestors." There can be little doubt that inherited qualities are widely manifested in this, as well as in other vital phenomena. In fact, the physical improvement of families and races would be difficult to effect if the laws of inheritance are set at naught. And observed facts are all that need be attended to; the causes are beyond our finding out. It suffices that consumption, gout, insanity, deafness, hare-lip, and other ills that flesh is heir to, are, in many instances, hereditary, as the very terms of the phrase imply. Family likenesses, perpetuated through successive generations, strikingly confirm the truth of the transmission of physical qualities by inheritance.

Franklin relates, in his autobiography, that old people in his village assured him that his own nature and constitution were so completely those of one of his uncles, whose death occurred four years before Franklin's birth, that if those two events had coincided, they might have passed for a case of transmigration of souls. An equally striking likeness existed between two brothers, Khasak and Ourbrusk, sons of a Persian prince who was killed in 1815, in the Russian service. They could hardly be distinguished from each other. Khasak, the elder by three years, usually resided in St. Petersburg, but often travelled. All Paris knew Ourbrusk, who was constantly to be seen at the libraries, and especially at every first performance at the lyrical theatres. To complete the resemblance, they both died recently at the age of eighty-two.

In spite of certain alterations, the typical features peculiar to the houses of Guise and Lorraine were transmitted to all their descendants through a long series of generations. The Bourbon countenance, the Condés' aquiline nose, the thick and protruding lower lip bequeathed to the house of Austria by a Polish princess, are well-known instances. We have only to look at a coin of our George the Third, to be reminded of our present royal family. During Addison's short ministry, Mrs. Clarke, who solicited his favour, had been requested to bring with her the papers proving that she was Milton's daughter. But as soon as she entered his cabinet, Addison said, "Madam, I require no further evidence. Your resemblance to your illustrious father is the best of all."

The Comte de Pont, who died in 1867 at nearly a hundred, told Dr. Foissac that, during the Restoration, he often met in the salons of M. Desmousseaux de Givre, prefect of Arras, a man at whose approach he shuddered, as he would at the sight of an apparition, so wonderfully was he like Robespierre. M. de Pont confided his impressions to the prefect, who told him, smiling at his prejudice, that the person in question passed for Robespierre's natural son; that, in fact, it was a matter of notoriety.

Next to family likeness, vitality, or the duration of life, is the most important character transmitted by inheritance. The two daughters of Victor Amadeus the Second, the Duchess of Burgundy and her sister Marie-Louise, married to Philip the Fifth, both remarkable for their beauty, died at twenty-six. In the Turgot family fifty years was the usual limit of life. The great minister, on the approach of that term, although in good health, remarked to his friends that it was time to put his affairs in order; and he died, in fact, at fifty-three. In the house of Romanoff, the duration of life is short, independent of the fact that several of its members met with violent deaths. The head of this illustrious race, Michael Federovitch, died at forty-nine; Peter the Great was scarcely fifty-three. The Empress Anne died at forty-seven; the tender-hearted Elizabeth at fifty-one. Of Paul's four sons, Alexander died at forty-eight, Constantine at forty-two, Nicholas at fifty-nine, and the Grand Duke Michael at fifty-one.

In the houses of Saxony and Prussia, on the contrary, examples of longevity are far from rare. Frederick the Great, in spite of his continual wars and his frequent excesses at table, was seventy-four; Frederick William the Third was seventy; the Emperor William, in his seventy-ninth year, is still hale and hearty. In all the countries of Europe, families of octogenarians, nonagenarians, and centenarians, may be cited. On the 1st of April, 1716, there died in Paris a saddler of Doulevant, in Champagne, more than a hundred years old. To inspire Louis the Fourteenth with the flattering hope of living as long, he was made, two years previously, to present that monarch with a bouquet on St. Louis's Day. His father had lived one hundred and thirteen years; his grandfather one hundred and twelve. Jean Surrington, a farmer in the environs of Berghem, lived to be one hundred and sixty. The day before his death, in complete possession of his mental faculties, he divided his property amongst his children; the eldest was one hundred and three, and, what is still more extraordinary, the youngest was only nine. Jean Golembiewski (the oldest man in the French army, if still alive), who accompanied King Stanislas Leczinski into France, belonged to a family of centenarians. His father lived to be one hundred and twenty-one, his grandmother one hundred and thirty.

Recent incredulity respecting centenarians has been carried to the extreme limit of common sense and fairness. All men are not liars. Many facts, which cannot be completely attested in all their particulars in black and white, may nevertheless be perfectly true. No theoretical or à priori reason can be adduced why ultra-centenarianism should not occur. Nothing in the functions or properties of living bodies indicates how long they are made to last. Many fish and marine mammalia are known to live to indeterminate ages. It may be said that the former at least are cold-blooded, and that they make but a small expenditure of vital force. But many birds, whose case and circumstances are the very reverse, offer notorious examples of longevity. Why should not the renovating process, which maintains, for a while, the adult frame in health, continue to do so for an unlimited period? Why, in short, should men decline and die, instead of living on and on? We can only answer that it is the law of Nature—the will of the Creator who called all things into being.

Granted the axiom, "Men wish to live long," the next step is to discover how to do it. Not a few seem to be trying, as long as they survive, how not to do it. By carelessness, by defiance of common precautions, by avoidable accident, by overwork, quite as much as by vicious excesses, people expose themselves to the risk either of a sharp illness, or, what is worse, of falling into permanent bad health. And what are acute disease or an ailing condition, but the first slope of the facile descent at whose foot yawn the wide-open jaws of all-devouring Death? Such folks do not die; they kill themselves.

A skilful practitioner, Fouquier, ventured to pronounce his inaugural thesis "On the advantages of a feeble constitution." It was not so much a paradoxical whim, as a charitable consolation for the encouragement of valetudinarians. But the indispensable condition of success was, that the feeble constitution should be well taken care of. Without that, the circumstances most favourable to longevity, such as middle stature; moderate stoutness, inclining to leanness; sufficient strength; the regular exercise of the principal functions; a broad chest; slow and late growth; long and peaceful slumber; and, above all, a good stomach, do not inevitably insure a prolonged career of life, although they hold out a fair promise of it. Stunted growth even is no invincible obstacle to longevity. A humpback, named Nicholas Marc, lived one hundred and ten years; the dwarf, Elspeth Walson, not quite six-and-twenty inches high, one hundred and fifteen. The famous Polish dwarf, Count Borolowski, who spent the greater part of his life in England, also reached one hundred. But accident on the one hand, and care-taking on the other, both apart, we may believe that the original stock of innate vitality differs in different individuals. As cats are extremely hard to kill, while rabbits may be given their quietus with a fillip, so, as far as resistance under hard knocks and unhealthy conditions is concerned, there are human cats and human rabbits. French veterans call the former "durs-à-cuire," tough ones to cook. Our Countess of Desmond, who climbed up apple-trees to divert her declining years, must have been of the very toughest. "There are people," says Galen, "born with so poor a constitution, that Æsculapius himself could not keep them alive up to sixty." Nevertheless, it is everybody's duty to do his utmost to preserve both his own life and the lives of others.

To discover the secret of living long, the Chaldeans had recourse, not to the laws of organised beings or the experience of medical practice, but to the influence of the stars and of magic spells. These notions, after leading the East astray, found favour in Rome at the beginning of the Empire. In the eleventh century, alchemy made a vigorous start, but continued the astrological and cabalistic system of mystery, hieroglyphic characters, and secret initiation. The services unsuspectingly rendered to experimental chemistry by the alchemists are not denied; but the reader may be reminded that a universal remedy, or elixir of life, was quite as much their object as the transmutation of metals. Both desiderata, in their eyes, were inseparably united; for of what use was inexhaustible wealth, without length of days to enjoy it in? or what did a protracted existence profit, without the means of procuring its comforts and pleasures? Several adepts proclaimed they had discovered both. They were either crazed enthusiasts or gross impostors.

In the eighth century, Geber, an Arabian alchemist, vaunted his Red Elixir, a solution of gold, which infallibly restored the aged to youth, and prolonged life indefinitely. The panacea proposed by the Vicomte de Lapasse, in 1861, in his book "Sur la Longévité," is the very same thing as Geber's Elixir. Dippel, more modest, only promised two centuries to whoever should take his many-times-rectified oil distilled from stags' horns. Unfortunately, none of these physicians healed themselves. Dippel died in 1733, at the age of sixty; Paracelsus, the most absurd of all, was only forty-seven; Arnaud de Villeneuve, seventy-six; the great Van Helmont, seventy-nine. Roger Bacon and Raymond Lulle did not get beyond eighty-one, which was a small allowance for men in possession of the universal panacea. Cornaro's would-be imitators did not fare better. The Jesuit Lessius, who translated Cornaro into Latin, and observed the same abstinence, died at sixty-nine; the learned jurisconsult, Bartholus, who also childishly weighed his aliments, got no farther than forty-three. Short commons will not insure the completion of a century.

"If you wish to keep well," said Frederick Hoffmann, "beware of the doctors and their medications." To understand this strange advice, given by a famous practitioner, one has only to read the prescriptions of Gui Patin, Chirac,* and company. The Princess Palatine, sister-in-law of Louis the Fourteenth and mother of the regent, wrote on the 23rd of November, 1672: "Here, no infant is safe. The doctors have already sent into the other world five of the Queen's children, the last only three weeks ago. They have done as much for the children of Monsieur." This was only the natural result of carrying a preconceived system to excess. Every overdone and exaggerated mode of treatment ought to excite distrust. The universal remedy, imagined by alchemists, has never existed, and never will. In spite of which, venesection, purgation, sudation, starvation, and other specific 'ations, have all had their vogue; and some, unfortunately, as bleeding, for every form of malady, are not yet obsolete.

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* Chirac is the doctor who, when the resurrection of Lazarus was discussed in his presence, quietly observed, "Ah! if he had been one of my patients!"

It makes one shudder to read, in Amelot de la Houssaie's Mémoires, that Louis the Thirteenth was bled forty-seven times, and emitised, or purged, two hundred and fifteen times in a single year! Unnecessary bleeding had something to do with Raphael's early death. Although, during the last thirty or forty years, the practice of bleeding has been reduced in France to narrow limits, its abuse still persists in the Spanish and Italian peninsulas, and strangers ought to be warned of it. The Italian doctors outdo the Sangrados of every other country in the world in employing venesection for almost every complaint. You may meet with Italians who have been bled a hundred and fifty times in the course of their lives. The doctors' justification is, that the exceptional climate of Turin renders this remedial measure indispensable!

One of their most notable victims must be fresh in everyone's memory. On the 29th of May, 1861, after a stormy debate in Parliament, Count Cavour went home depressed and anxious. In the night he was awoke by vomiting and intestinal pains, the consequence of indigestion, which frequently occurs under similar circumstances. He was bled immediately; again at eight in the morning; again at five in the afternoon. The Paris medical journals did not conceal their conviction that, under such treatment, the illustrious statesman's case was hopeless. On the 1st and 2nd of June he was bled again; again on the 4th. On the morning of the 6th he died.

In the November following one of his doctors fell a martyr to the same absurd system, having undergone, in the illness which carried him off, seven bleedings besides numerous leechings. We herein see the wisdom of Hoffmann's advice to beware of headstrong doctors and their ways. Celsus forbids the employment of precautionary remedies; that is, we should let well alone. Continual physic-taking is the delight of hypochondriacs, and of people who have nothing else to occupy their minds. Doses and pills three times a day are their unfailing solace and amusement. They prefer seeking health from medicines instead of from food and exercise. They would fain recover youth and prolong life by some mysterious arcanum, neglecting temperance and restraint of their passions, whose fire, when constantly stirred and fanned, consumes and shortens their existence.

Broussais, who carried the depletory system still farther, was inexorable in the application of his method. Leeches succeeded to leeches, and debilitants to debilitants; and when, in spite of this treatment, the disease was overcome by the superior resources of nature, want of strength still continued so as to constitute an actual illness. Recoveries were desperately long and slow. General Mongardet, whom Dr. Foissac knew, escaped certain death by cheating his doctor. When convalescent, he begged and prayed in vain to have a little nourishment. Broussais had set a severe and stern nurse, or rather keeper, to watch him strictly. The general, furious, got rid of her for a moment, hunted about for food, and, finding none, hastily swallowed a plateful of cats'-meat that stood within reach. He expected to die of indigestion, but fell asleep. From that moment he contrived to deceive Broussais, ate and drank his fill, and got well again.

But Dr. Foissac does not confine himself to cautioning; he offers excellent and practical advice, so that his book deserves to be the vade-mecum of all who wish to defer their departure till the latest moment possible. It is unprejudiced, full of research, and perfectly free from quackery. For details, the work itself must be consulted. Its upshot and entire tendency are to impress upon us, that the attainment of the sum of days allotted to us by the Great Creator demands neither more nor less than the constant exercise of all the common sense which each individual has the good fortune to be blessed with.

LEGENDS OF THE FICHTELGEBIRGE.

The mountain-chain which stands close to the junction of Saxony, Bavaria, and Bohemia has scarcely received the especial attention which it merits. The Fichtelgebirge, less commonly called the Fichtelberg, is the starting-point whence proceed, making a very broad fork, to the north-east the Erzgebirge, to the north-west the Thuringian Forest. Those who study the history of the electorate and kingdom of Saxony, as distinguished from the vast duchy of that name, which fell to pieces through the deposition of Henry the Lion, the ancestor of our present royal family, must keep their eyes steadily fixed on the Fichtelgebirge, or they will go very wrong with their geography.

Just now, partially under the guidance of a local antiquary, Herr Ludwig Tapf, who has compressed a vast amount of erudition into a surprisingly small compass, we turn to the venerable mountain-chain, on account of the very interesting traditions with which it abounds. Here, transmuted into the shape of the popular legend, the mythology of heathen Germany is most visibly at home. Here, of course, as elsewhere, is to be found the Deity Wuotan, or Wodan, whom we must persist in calling by his Scandinavian name, Odin; and whom we find it so difficult to associate with Mercury, notwithstanding the evidence of Tacitus and the incontestible fact that "Dies Mercurii" is accepted as Latin for our Wednesday. In the dialect of Westphalia, the day in question is still named "Godonstag."

The mere residence of Odin on the Fichtelgebirge confers thus no exceptional honour on the chosen spot. It is not much that he shows himself there as the Wild Huntsman, though it is worth mentioning that, according to some legends of the place, he, his followers, and his dogs, are all in the habit of appearing without their heads; and especially interesting is the reputed fact, that one daring peasant, following the train, caught up a headless dog and put it into his pocket. Odin always revered courage, and the only punishment inflicted on the dog-stealer was the conversion of the stolen animal into a lump of charcoal, which he found in his pocket on the following morning.

The acquaintance which our readers have already made with the Kiffhäuser* and its subterranean inhabitant—who is looked upon, sometimes, as the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, sometimes as one of the Emperors Otho, but who is unquestionably the God Odin—need not prevent us from mentioning another ancient potentate who lives in the Fichtelgebirge, and refreshes himself with the contents of a barrel of wine, sitting at a stone table, round the legs of which his beard has already grown, while he rests his feet upon a dog. On the barrel sits a bird, which, whenever the beard of its royal master has accomplished a round of the table, flies round the mountain to see how things are going on, and brings back the news. Usually the king is scantily attired; but when he receives guests he puts on an old-fashioned German dress, and entertains them in a spacious hall adjoining his private room, his beard on such occasions being carried by what we may call his valet. When the beard has grown thrice round the table, he will issue forth to battle with the army, which, with him, inhabits the mountain. The chamber is guarded by another dog outside the door; so here we have Odin, his wolves, and his ravens, without an essential modification — a remarkable instance of the direction which is taken by a religion which is supplanted by another not yet obliterated from the popular memory. The god of heathenism becomes, in a Christian time, a king or a fiend, as the case may be, and the king may bear the name of some historical personage who has acquired a wide popularity. The student of legendary lore may take it as a rule that, wherever he finds an historical personage with mythical surroundings, the central figure is much older than it looks, and bears a name that does not properly belong to it.

There is no doubt that when—which is actually the case—we find the "Wise King Solomon" in a particular mountain, named the Ochsenkopf, he owes this out-of-the-way position to the wide-spread knowledge of his name and of his reputation for wisdom even among the least-educated classes. The good folks who planted the Emperor Frederick in the Kiffhäuser probably could tell very little about his wars; but they were aware, somehow or other, that he had been a great man with a red beard, whence he had derived the nickname Barbarossa. In the same way the peasants of the Fichtelgebirge, having only dim notions of the Old Testament or of the wise king's connection with Jerusalem, perceived that they had a very respectable appellation to bestow upon a being whose rightful name had disappeared altogether. And thus Odin, besides roaming about as a vagabond Wild Huntsman, becomes, under certain influences, the "Wise King Solomon."

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* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 7, p. 104, "Legends of the Kiffhäuser."

The legend connected with this transformation is curious. King Solomon, before he died, ordered that his corpse should be encased in a silver coffin, and placed in a carriage of the same material, drawn by six white horses. These were to go their own way, without a guide; and wherever they stopped the corpse was to be deposited. Whence they started no one seems to have ascertained; but, at all events, they stopped at a church with golden altars, which stood upon the Ochsenkopf, whereupon the car, the horses, the coffin, and the church likewise, all sank together into the interior of the mountain. Here the wise king still lies, sleeping behind one of the altars, a shower of gold dropping perpetually upon him; and here he will continue to lie until an appointed time, when he must wake up and take his part in a battle. That in this strange story nothing is historical but a name is obvious. It is almost equally obvious that the battle to which such vague reference is made, like that in which the long-bearded king will some day engage, is that conflict between the gods and their foes, which brings the mythology, most plainly shown in the Edda, to such an awful termination.

The gold that dropped upon the "wise king's" coffin, connects his posthumous visit to Germany with divers stories about hidden treasures. One of the prettiest treats of a woman, who, on one fine Midsummer-day, went with her child into a wood to look for berries; and who, moreover, was lucky enough to light upon a bush which, plucked in the night, was not to be exhausted. After a while she perceived a hollow, which she entered with her child. Her eyes were soon gratified by the sight of gold lying in heaps, and of three white maidens, who told her that she might take as much of the treasure as she pleased with one grasp. Acquisitiveness was strong in the woman, and she grasped—or, as vulgar people would say, grabbed—thrice. This unworthy operation occupied time and weakened memory; and no sooner had the woman rushed out of the hollow with the dubiously-acquired treasure, than the entrance was closed upon her, and the thought just occurred to her that she had left her child behind. All she had to do was to wait for the next Midsummer-day; and we may here take occasion to remark that the feast of St. John the Baptist generally becomes conspicuous in the treasure-seeking legends of the Fichtelgebirge. When the day arrived, the entrance to the hollow was again open, and the woman found her child with a rosy apple in its hand. She clasped it in her arms and caressed it, and on this occasion thought nothing of treasure. The three white maidens had, no doubt, much to do with the rosy apple, and the comfortable board and lodging of the child for twelve whole months.

There is another tale, according to which one of a party of children, who were playing near the same hollow on Midsummer-day, bolted into it, and was immediately shut in. The parents of the lost one were deeply grieved; but on the following Midsummer-day it stood before them with a nosegay in its hand; and, what was most strange of all, it maintained that its mother had been with it during the whole time of its absence, and had nurtured it with delicate care. We must naturally assume that this supplementary mother was one of the white maidens, although they are not named in the story.

These white maidens, who appear in some shape or other all over Germany, carry flowers in their hands, bathe in mountain brooks, and favour mortals with gifts of no apparent value, which, however, on close inspection, turn out to be pure gold, are modifications of old heathen goddesses, say Holda or Perahta; nor is it any proof against their quondam dignity that some of them are occasionally under the weight of a curse, from which some friendly mortal may deliver them. Dethroned deities hold in the popular mind a position subject to many variations; they may be popular kings, or hateful fiends, or virtuous outcasts. The latter condition is plainly stated in Moore's poem, Paradise and the Peri.

In this condition we find a lonely maiden, who appeared, at the foot of one of the mountains of the Fichtelgebirge, to a melancholy, bashful shepherd, who gazed upon her in admiration, became deeply enamoured of her, and dared not open his mouth. The apparitions of the maiden were frequent, and this sort of thing went on for weeks, till, at last, the timid swain plucked up courage and spoke out. In answer to his inquiries, the charming being informed him that she was a princess; that she had been spell-bound for centuries to the spot in which she appeared; and that he was fated to deliver her. He could not, she said, see her again until St. Peter's Day (29th of June), when he was not to be alarmed if she put on the shape of an ugly old woman, but was to kiss her boldly three times on the forehead, and thus effect her release. The time of her absence seemed to him very long, and he thought that St. Peter's Day would never come; but when it did come at last, he was seized with a mortal tremor, and drove his flock to another mountain. When he returned to the old spot, he saw his fair bride again; but she told him that the right moment was past, and that she must now wait for another deliverer. He never saw her afterwards.

Other deities who have left traces on the Fichtelgebirge are the goddesses Holda, Ostara, and Perahta. The first of these is, as she always was, a benevolent being, and under the name "Frau Holle" she produces snow by shaking the feathers out of her bed. We recollect, when children, to have heard of a mysterious old woman, who plucked geese with a similar result, and who is, perhaps, remembered in some of our nurseries now. Holda also has the attribute which the Romans assigned to Juno Lucina; and as she loves to live deep below the surface of waters, water plays, in the belief of the children on the Fichtelgebirge, the part which English children give to the parsley-bed, in accounting for the continuance of the human race. Ostara is another beneficent goddess, of whom the learned in German mythology are scarcely able to discover any particulars whatever, but whose wide popularity is proved by the fact that she gives the name to the Easter festival, called in German "Osterfest." This was originally a pagan institution, and when the Christian missionaries adapted it to the new faith, they attempted to obliterate the memory of the goddess by the substitution of some more orthodox name, such as Pascha; but the attempt was futile, and Ostara has held her own in Germany and England to this day. In Holland, however, the name of the festival is "Pascha." With Easter-eggs the goddess is naturally associated, and she is supposed to bestow them liberally upon children.

Very shabbily treated by the superstitious of Southern Germany is the third of the above-mentioned goddesses, Perahta, or Berahta—that is, the "shining one"—who has degenerated into a mere bogie. In some places she still gives a name to Twelfth-day, which, as here, is likewise recognised as the Epiphany; and on the eve of that festival children are informed that if they are naughty she will rip them up. There is, however, a preventive beside good-nature against this visitation. Certain greasy cakes are baked, which, it is thought, if rubbed on the skin, will make Perahta's knife harmless. Of lazy spinners, Perahta, whose name on the Fichtelgebirge has degenerated into "Parrett," is a determined foe; and this reminds us of her appearance, in French traditions, as Berthe, the mother of Charlemagne, to whose spinning proclivities reference is still made as an old proverb.

Less potent than these transmuted goddesses are the little women of the wood, called in the Thuringian dialect "Holzfrala." We hear of these in connection with other parts of Germany; but in one of the legends of the Fichtelgebirge we find one with belongings that seem peculiar to that spot. Once, it is said, there was a poor child, whose mother lay sick of a fever. Going alone into the forest, to gather strawberries, this child suddenly saw a little woman, entirely clothed with golden moss. With a request for some of the gathered fruit the child readily complied; and the woman, having eaten it with great satisfaction, tripped away. When the child took home her jug, the fruit was transformed to gold. The peculiarity in the story is the dress of golden moss, which is virtually a natural production, and which shines, when seen at a distance, like pure gold, but on close inspection loses all its lustre. Some interpreters of the wonderful would attribute the stories about hidden treasure, which are abundant on the Fichtelgebirge, to the presence of this strange kind of vegetation; but, in accordance with a doctrine stated above, we would rather fit the moss to the legend than the legend to the moss.

CONTENT.

My heart and I but lately were at strife,
She fell a-longing for a certain thing,
The which I could not give her, and my life
Grew sick and weary with her clamouring.
God knows I would have given my youth's wide scope,
To buy my heart but one brief, blessed day
Of the blind bliss she coveted; but hope,
When I appealed to it, turned dumb away.
Until hope failed, I did not chide my heart,
But was full tender to her misery,
I knew how hard and bitter was her part;
But when I saw that good was not for me,
I felt that time and tears were vainly spent;
"Heart," said I, "hope is silent; be content."

Poor heart! She listened earnest, humble-wise,
While my good angel gave her counsel strong,
Then from the dust and ashes did arise,
And through her trembling lips brake forth a song;

A soothing song that grew into a strain
  Of praise for bliss denied as well as given.
She sang it then to charm a lingering pain,
  She sings it now for gladness, morn and even.
She sings it, seeing on life's garden wall
  Love's deep red roses in the sunshine stir,
And singing, passes, envying not at all,
  Content to feel that love is not for her.
The roses are another's, bloom and scent,
  My heart and I have heartsease—and content.

DOGS AND THEIR DAYS.

Of the happy days spent by dogs in their own homes—homes, of which the dog forms the centre of attraction, the object of a species of dog-worship—I forbear to speak, for is not the sanctity of private life inviolate? Why should a writer be called upon to expose his weaknesses? Why, then, should I depict the daily life of my own pet dog, and describe the care with which he is washed, combed, and fed, at the risk of provoking the ire of those critics who some time since growled and snapped because a favourite cat—a prize-winner too—had breakfasted at the Crystal Palace on a fried smelt, and the liver-wing of a chicken? Why not, I should like to know? Whom should we nourish and cherish but those whom we love best? Our fellow-creatures, Mr. Critic points out, thereby opening a wide question as to what is a fellow-creature. It is easy enough to say that I am wrong to spend money in prime rumpsteak—my dog does not like chicken wings or he should have them—and that I ought to save the money and give it to the poor bipeds of Mesopotamia, or some other place I do not care about. I do not feel for the hungry man in Mesopotamia. I never saw him, and I desire not the pleasure of his acquaintance. He may be my fellow-creature, but my dog certainly is. He knows me and my ways, such as they are. He sympathises with me in sickness and in sorrow—laying his beautiful head affectionately on my knee, and looking unutterable love out of his great dark eyes. When he is troubled or disturbed at any unwonted sight or sound, he comes to me, pawing my arm, and barking at me for an explanation. By day he follows me faithfully; by night he sleeps beside my couch. If he is not a fellow-creature, who is?

Dropping a discreet veil over ordinary doggy domesticity, I may yet venture to lift the curtain of a famous home of the friend of man. To reach the house where many thousands of rarely-bred dogs have abode, we must first endeavour to find Kensal New Town, a region clinging closely to the canal, and presenting that particularly cheerless aspect which characterises a growing district. Sprightly new terraces and crescents have sprung up rapidly, looking very smart indeed, and as if astonished at finding themselves in such queer company as the old shabby cottages, guiltless of staircases, which line the canal bank. There is no outward show of misery in Kensal New Town; the inhabitants of the primeval cottages being well off in the way of linen, if conclusions may be drawn from the quantity hung out to dry; but the dwellings themselves are afflicted with all the disorders that houseflesh is heir to. They are, for the most part, terribly out of the perpendicular, suffering from affections of the spine, broken ribs, and swellings about the knees. Skin disease is also prevalent, large patches of plaster having peeled off here and there, and communicated a generally mangy look to the lopsided tenements. Among, but not of, these unpromising habitations, is a neat, cosy little house, freshly painted, swept, and garnished, as to the windows, with stuffed bull pups and other interesting specimens of sporting and pet dogs. This is Canine Castle, the abode of "Bill George," who delights in calling himself "Old" Bill George—not that he is very old, being, indeed, a hale and hearty veteran, who prizes the "Old" prefix to his name as an indication of the affection in which he is held by dogs and men. His card bears a bull-dog's head as a crest; and in directing letters to "Canine Castle," his correspondents have fallen in admirably with the humour of the proprietor. They delight in addressing him—knowing that there is no fear of letters to so eminent a person being miscarried—as Lord George, King William, General George, and so forth; and the frequenters of Spelling Bees would be amused at the various ways of rendering "Canine Castle," such as "K-nine Castle," and, better still, "K. 9. Castle"—a feat equalling that of the stable-boy, who chalked the name of a famous racer on the stable-door as "Pot8os." While in the custody of "Old Bill George," dogs have pleasant days enough. They are in good company and plenty of it, the stock on hand often amounting to four hundred, made up of all varieties of terribly high-bred doggies. Chief in the affection of the owner is a breed of large bull-dogs, a choice and unequalled strain of blood. The immortal progenitor of this illustrious race was "Big-headed Billy," whose great brindled head looks out of a glass case, while his portrait looms large upon walls covered with pictures and stuffed specimens of canine celebrities. From "Big-headed Billy"—a huge dog in heart and body, weighing some eighty pounds—sprang "Dan" and the children of Dan, who receive us with a mighty clamour, as we step into the yard. They are ferocious in aspect, these mighty bull-dogs, but by no means truculent in disposition, being, in fact, a living proof that it is not always safe to judge by appearances. Their loud barking and tearing at their chains is mere sound and fury, signifying nothing but the naturally doggy desire to be spoken to, patted, and caressed. White, or rather pink, for the most part, they nearly all boast a patch of brindle, most lovely when placed over the eye or at the base of the tail—beauty-spots bequeathed to his descendants by the patriarch "Big-headed Billy," as are the silver hairs in the tail of the progeny of that illustrious race-horse Kingston. "Dan" himself is pointed out as the pride of the house, as the living embodiment of what a bull-dog ought to be.

Domiciled in great wooden houses, carefully littered down, are superb specimens of other great dogs. Mastiffs, with their black muzzles, and soft, low-toned bark; deep-voiced bloodhounds, with great hanging lips, and eyes placed close together, giving a curiously-vicious aspect to the highest type of the hound—a dog whose scent is keen enough to track a man, and test to the utmost the skill of Sir William of Deloraine's descendants. Magnificent deerhounds, rough of coat, shake their long limbs, and ask with their beautiful eyes for a word of encouragement. The chorus raised by the canine magnates of the yard is almost deafening, as "Old" Bill George passes from one to the other, giving a word of kindness here, and a friendly pat there, expatiating by the way on the "points" of the various animals. Every variety of sporting dog has its representative. In that kennel is a pack of foxhounds; here again are pointers and setters, otter hounds, Clumber spaniels and water-spaniels. One stable is occupied by those useful and excellent animals, bull terriers, of all sorts and sizes, revealing more or less in their conformation their relationship to the grand old English bull-dog. Fox-terriers—just now in demand—are also present in force, handsome and plucky, "game as a pebble, and sharp as a steel trap." Next to claim attention are the terriers proper—English terriers of the highest class, bearing yet in their outline the tiniest possible resemblance to the primeval "bull." That white lady is a thorough canine aristocrat. Her beautiful coat of white satin, untouched by colour of any kind, encloses limbs of the daintiest mould. She is all beauty—a silken damsel, if you will, but full of life and swiftness, dash and daring. She can run like a deer, but would "rather fight than run any day in the week." Here, too, are Scotch terriers of every texture and degree, from the great, long-bodied otter terriers to the smart Dandie Dinmonts, with their bright intelligent faces. Toy dogs, tiny pets of all kinds abound. Silky Maltese, hydrocephalous-looking King Charles's spaniels, Italian greyhounds, and baby black-and-tan terriers—pictures of prettiness and condition. The inside of Canine Castle is to the full as interesting as the out. Every picture, every case of stuffed dogs, every engraving, has a history of battles and prizes won, and hecatombs of rats and other "varmint" destroyed. As the yard is a splendid specimen of dog life, so is the parlour of "Old Bill George" a museum of all that pertains to dogs and their ways.

After this peep into dog life, let us look at our friends on parade, when they literally have a day to themselves, and make a show of the most interesting kind. It is difficult to say who among the actors in a dog-show are the most thoroughly engrossed in the proceedings. A thousand dogs attract many thousand men and women. Chained each one to his particular home for the time being, the dogs, to do them justice, look dignified enough until some person with whom they are acquainted approaches, when they at once set up a tremendous barking, tug furiously at their chains, and at times sit up and beg to be let loose. Still there is a difference in their style of recognition, for it would ill become a mastiff, a bloodhound, or a Mount St. Bernard, to demean himself as a Skye terrier. His weight would be against him, and the notion of a bloodhound "sitting up" would be too funny to suit the dignity of that serious and contemplative animal. But even a bloodhound is amenable to blandishments, and the mastiff looks for caresses as his due.

Curiously enough, the feminine portion of the spectators, while indifferent to the charms of the bull-dog, is keenly alive to those of his tiny caricature the pug, and his big brother the mastiff. Sealskin jackets and velvet mantles crowd round "Granby" and other great lion-like creatures of the mastiff race. Is it their short faces, their black muzzles, or their leonine colour? or is it not rather the well-known sweet temper of these creatures which proves an invincible attraction to the fair sex? The pugs are of all sorts and sizes, more or less wrinkled as to the forehead, and curly as to the tail—these "points," together with a fine large eye, being indispensable in a pug of honourable lineage. Their admirers are legion, crowding round the cages of the funny little beasts, who always recall, with a vividness foreign to other animals, their effigies in porcelain. Pugs have undergone strange vicissitudes of fashion. In the time of red heels, patches and powder, china monsters and negro pages, pugs had a glorious day, but were doomed to undergo a terrible eclipse on the break-up of those ancient and noble institutions. By degrees the short-faced doggies disappeared from society, or only occasionally appeared in the train of an ancient dowager — waddling after their mistress in over-fed luxuriance. But the wheel of fashion has gone round. As heels increased in altitude, so did pugs increase in favour, until they recovered their former reputation, and their black noses were no longer out of joint.

While the pug mania, like the china mania, may be looked upon as a revival, the taste for mastiffs is almost a new thing. We read, it is true, of the "Old English" bull-dogs, mastiffs, and great ban-dogs; but so far as can be ascertained, these dogs were much smaller than their descendants, who have been carefully bred for size. To a reverend gentleman is due much of the improvement in the modern breed of mastiff, which has been elevated by his care to magnificent proportions.

It requires no dog-fancier to trace the links of relationship which bind the great watch-dogs together. In the rough and smooth St. Bernard, and in the English mastiff, are distinctly traceable the strain of the bloodhound — perhaps the most really thoroughbred dog alive — whose long ears, deep lip, narrow head, and keen scent, stamp him as a distinct type. Oddly like unto the bloodhound and the Newfoundland are the rough St. Bernards, while the smoother of these dogs are veritable mastiffs, retaining somewhat overmuch of the bloodhound expression. Three famous breeders of the present day are working hard at the improvement of the English mastiff; one by the aid of the bloodhound, another by the St. Bernard, and the third, it is shrewdly suspected, by the bull-dog. From whatever source they produce their dogs, it is already settled that a mastiff who resembles a bloodhound too closely stands no chance of getting a prize, the happy medium which combines the bull-dog brow with a little of the bloodhound lip being esteemed perfection.

Most of the champion dogs trace their ancestry to the celebrated Venus, a canine mother of the Gracchi. Among the most remarkable of these are Granby, said to be the best dog in England; Turk, the winner of more than fifty prizes; and Champion Turk, who boasts an equally glorious career, and rejoices in being the father of the magnificent Granby. Round the necks of these choice specimens of the watch-dog hang the emblems of their many victories in the peaceful contest of the dog-show. Foreign potentates—mostly Eastern—are eager buyers of bull-dogs and mastiffs, employing them in hunting big game, and also for mere show. It is not uncommon to see French and other foreign gentlemen, smitten with admiration for the customs of this great country, driving out with an immense "bouledogue" by their side, imagining that they thereby give a peculiarly English style to their "turn out." To guard against the possibility of purchase, enormous sums are—to comply with the rules of dog-shows—asked for animals of prime merit, who weigh on an average as much as a man. For Granby, ten thousand pounds are asked; for Turk, a thousand; for Champion Turk, a much older dog, a hundred guineas; but for all these "fancy" prices, a fifty-pound note will purchase a glorious mastiff—"not dear," as a dealer remarks, "at six-and-eightpence a pound." Scores of these grand animals are on view, some barking, others looking calmly on, as if they had been to shows before, and had seen the vanity of them. Greyhounds stretch their long limbs, and regard the whole proceeding with a lazy composure, feeling somewhat out of their element—knowing well that Ashdown or Altcar would show them to better advantage. The collies also do not quite understand it. Where are the sheep to give them the chance of exhibiting their intelligence in driving? On a lone hillside, under a sky threatening a storm, they would soon show how quickly and neatly they could fold a flock, and collect the stragglers; but here, where there is nothing to be done but to sit still and look handsome, they are oppressed by the painful sense of leisure. Those odd creatures, near the keen-looking collies, are Dachshunde—German badger-dogs, not unlike the old English turnspit—brave and steady dogs, for all their curiously-twisted forelimbs, which begin by being bandy, and end by turning out the toes in the funniest manner imaginable. Their bodies too are quaintly formed, as if nature had tried how far one pair of legs could be placed from the other without inconveniencing the animal. The great rough retrievers look pensively out of their golden eyes, as if wondering what it is all about. Dalmatians—plum-pudding dogs—clearly do not like either their position or their company. Men and women there are enough and to spare, but where are the horses, between whose feet the Dalmatian loves to run? At a horse-show, now, they would enjoy themselves immensely; but here, where they have nothing but mere two-legged creatures to gaze at, there is nothing to excite the Dalmatian mind. Mount St. Bernards too seem strangely out of place, sitting stately enough in their beautiful coats, and look wistfully at the Newfoundlands, who prefer water in a fluid state, and sigh not for Alpine snow and ice. The smaller dogs enjoy the fun much more. That white Pomeranian, with snowy coat and eyes and nose of deepest black, is beside himself with joy as his mistress draws near to comfort him with caresses and doggy talk; while the terriers, rough and smooth, black-and-tan, and Dandie Dinmonts, express their feelings by perpetual noise. "Toys" repose on velvet cushions in glass cases, and look with a well-bred air of languor upon the audience—evidently regarding the whole affair as very kindly and properly arranged for their own particular amusement.

From this high-day, if not holiday, of dog life, let us turn for a while to visit our poor friends in trouble—trouble the greatest which can befall the most faithful and single-minded of created beings. Is it possible, I wonder, for man—with his self-sufficiency and self-reliance, his powers of resource, his adaptability to changed circumstances, and all the other qualities wherewith he credits himself—to realise, for a single instant, the feelings of a lost dog? Can he, with all his imagination, put himself in the place of the bewildered creature, whose love for his master knows no stint and no diminution, though hard fare and harder blows be his lot, who suddenly finds himself deprived of the friend to whom he has looked from puppyhood as a great and glorious being, to be obeyed and worshipped through good and evil times? Mark his puzzled look, the hard struggle of keen intelligence, to solve the problem. See him run to and fro, gallop up a street and joyfully confront a wayfarer only to find himself deceived! With what a wistful eye he inquires if you cannot find the well-beloved but careless one who has left him alone in the world! A thought strikes him. He—the master—must have gone round the other corner. A brisk trot, followed by another disappointment. Not there. His master cannot have forsaken him. No; doggie knows him too well for that. He was a good and kind master, for our dogs see not, like other friends, our faults with preternatural clearness of vision. Now he is confused—not weary. Oh, no; he will never feel weariness in looking for his lord. He runs up and down, in and out, and at last—struck with sudden inspiration — makes for home. Lucky dog if he finds it, instead of wandering hopelessly about the muddy streets till Policeman X takes him in tow, and consigns him—alas! how changed from the sleek, beautiful pet that sallied out for a joyful stroll — to the care of that admirable institution, the Temporary Home for Lost and Starving Dogs, at Wandsworth Road, Battersea. Here the poor, lost, half-starved wayfarer finds food, shelter, and kindness from Mr. Johnson, who has a keen eye to the health and comfort of his numerous guests. No credentials are required to insure admittance—the thoroughbred aristocrat and the pedigreeless cur being equally certain of welcome. For three clear days hospitality is extended to the homeless creature. After that date, if his owner be too careless or ignorant to claim him, he may legally be sold—the new proprietor receiving a "good title" to his purchase.

The Temporary Home is hard by the York Road Station of the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway, and is easy of access from every part of London. At the first glance it is seen that the especial trimness and neatness, which should mark all canine establishments, are present in high perfection at the Lost Dogs' Home. Neat rows of well-built brick kennels, and a spacious yard for exercise, cover no inconsiderable space of ground, and are tenanted by hundreds of lost, forlorn, and unhappy dogs. So far as existence away from their master can be made tolerable, it is done by the aid of plentiful biscuit, broth, and paunch—of all of which many of the residents appear to stand sorely in need. The dogs are carefully sorted according to their day of admission—as Monday's dogs, Tuesday's dogs, &c.—to make sure that every one has his full three days of entertainment, all that are demanded by the law, and a great deal more than the institution can afford; for (there is no use in mincing the matter) subscriptions and donations hardly pour in with the alacrity which might have been expected from a "doggy" country like England. On these the home entirely depends, for although it stands, as it were, between the police regulations and the public, it receives none but volunteer aid. Concerning its value, it may be mentioned that, during 1874, three thousand two hundred dogs were either restored to their proper owners, or provided with new ones; that is to say, saved from destruction. As we look round the kennels we are saluted by a chorus which may be interpreted as "Come at last," as every dog, big and little, seems to imagine the visitor must be his own master come at last to claim him. With anxious faces, the lost ones rush to the bars in the hope that they are found. There is one exception to this rule—a magnificent deerhound, who deigns not to move, as if he were fully aware that a dog of his quality would surely be claimed sooner or later; but the poorer waifs and strays try every artifice to attract attention. There are biped visitors, too, who, with troubled mien, hurry through the kennels looking anxiously for a lost pet. That poor little lass inspects cell after cell with tears in her eyes, only to turn sadly away at last in disappointment, less fortunate than the tall gentleman with grey hair and a military bearing, whose eyes grow moist as his favourite leaps up, madly barking with delight, as he recognises the husband of the beloved mistress now gone for ever past the ken of dogs and men.

Having seen doggie at home, abroad, and on parade, let us pay a visit to him in hospital, under the care of Mr. C. J. Rotherham, who dwells hard by the abode of "Polly Perkins." The Cottage, St. Mary's Terrace, Paddington, is so perfect a specimen of street-locked country as to strike the visitor with amazement. In the heart of a crowded neighbourhood, we find a long narrow avenue, and passing up this, discover—surrounded by high walls and embowered by lofty trees—a veritable thatched cottage, one storey high, perhaps the last of its race in the great city. Till within a few years, this charming homestead was dwelt in by an ancient lady, who rejoiced that her trees and walls kept from her sight the invading town. It is now occupied by Mr. Rotherham and his town patients, for those who require country air and lengthened treatment are sent off to his brother in Yorkshire. It must not be imagined that all the dogs at Mr. Rotherham's are in evil case, as many are merely recovering themselves from the fatigue of a recent dog-show, among whom is that most "gentlemanly" mastiff "Vril," apparently on very friendly terms with "Maggie Lauder." Mr. Rotherham's fawn smut bull-dog also looks in excellent case, as does that rare dog, a white retriever—a triumph of Major Arbuthnot's skilful breeding. "Minx," an Italian greyhound, and the pet of the family, is also "pretty as a peach," but perhaps, with all her good points, less perfect than her son, "Blind Bertie," who, poor fellow, finds his way about, despite his affliction, and understands every word said to him. Here is the champion St. Bernard "Alp," a grand dog, just recovering from a severe illness, and beginning to look something like his old self again. Yonder is a setter, suffering from a violent cold; and next is Champion Rake, the wreck of a superb Irish water spaniel, well stricken in years. That smart collie, whose leg was broken by a hansom cab not long ago, is almost well, and trots about gaily; but the lean-looking mastiff in the next house will require a careful course of treatment. Turning from the great deerhounds and bull-dogs to the smaller fry located within doors, we find a miserable little Maltese lying before the fire, wrapped in flannel, shivering and growling at any attempt to remove him. Other small dogs, diversely affected, are gathered round the hearth, but the serious and contagious cases are kept severely apart. In a shed abutting on a stable and well warmed by a stove, is the distemper ward, kept at a high temperature, and filled with poor dogs in every state of misery, passing through that crisis of dog-life which, if not carefully watched, will quiet their barking for ever. Besides sick and ill-conditioned dogs, Mr. Rotherham has under his care sundry pets and pensioners. Two of the latter, a dog and a pony, were consigned to him a few years ago by the executrix of a deceased lady. The dog, whose provision was fifty guineas per annum, died some time since, but the pony still lives, a pleasant little rough Welshman, who will shake hands with you, follow you into the parlour, eat sugar, and join you in a jug of ale with all the pleasure in the world. Another pony is not only a pet himself, but pets others. His favourites are two—a wiry terrier and a great Persian cat, who dwell upon his back in sweet amity. Perhaps the terrier is the greater favourite of the two, as, although the absence of the cat only occasions slight uneasiness in the patron, he becomes fretful and downright ill-tempered if the dog takes himself off. This is not the only curious specimen of cat-and-dog life at "The Cottage." Here is a famous feline matron, whose instincts are so strong that she is not satisfied with bringing up her own kittens, but insists on nursing any puppies that may be about the premises. If no pups are given to her in addition to her own family, she roams restlessly about in search of some, and on a recent auspicious occasion actually stole four pug puppies, carried them off in her mouth, and brought them up with her own little kits, with all motherly love and watchfulness.

Altogether, the aspect of doggie in hospital is far from being so sad as might be expected. He is at least well cared for and skilfully treated, and the chances are much in favour of his once more seeing his master, and sharing with him the sports of the field and the comforts of his own home, until the dog's last day shall come, and his memory be enshrined, not in monuments of wood and of stone, but in the heart of his sorrowing mistress.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LIV.

ALGERNON'S state of mind, during his return journey to Whitford, was very much pleasanter than it had been on his way up to town. To be sure, he had committed himself distinctly to a very grave statement. That was always disagreeable. But then he had made an immense impression on Lord Seely by his statement. He had crushed and overwhelmed that "pompous little ass." He had humiliated "that absurd little upstart." And—best of all; for these others were mere dilettante pleasures, which no man of intelligence would indulge in at the cost of his solid interests—he had terrified him so completely with the spectre of a public scandal and disgrace, that my lord was ready to do anything to help him and Castalia out of England: of that there could be no doubt.

It must be owned that Algernon had so far justified the quick suspicions of his Whitford creditors and acquaintances, as to have conceived, for a moment, the idea of never more returning to that uninteresting town. It was extremely exhilarating to be in the position of a bachelor at large; to find himself free, for a time, of the dead weight of debt, which seemed to make breathing difficult in Whitford; for, although by plodding characters the relief might not have been felt until the debts were paid, Algernon Errington's spirit was of a sort that rose buoyant as ever, directly the external pressure was removed. And perhaps it was pleasantest of all to feel strengthened in the assurance that he still was a charming fellow, with capacities for winning admiration and making a brilliant figure, quite uninjured (although they had been temporarily eclipsed) by all the cloud of troubles which had gathered around him.

So he had, for a moment, thought of fairly running away from wife, and duns, and dangers of official severities. But it was but a brief unsubstantial vision that flashed for an instant and was gone. Algernon was too clear-sighted not to perceive that the course was inconvenient—nay, to one of his temperament, impracticable. People who started off to live on their wits in a foreign country ought to be armed with a coarser indifference to material comforts, than he was gifted with. Alternations of ortolans and champagne, with bread and onions, would be—even supposing one could be sure of the ortolans, which Algernon knew he could not—entirely repugnant to his temperament. He had no such strain of adventurousness, as would have given a pleasant glow of excitement to the endurance of privation under any circumstances whatever. Professed Bohemians might talk as they pleased about kicking over traces, and getting rid of trammels, and so forth; but, for his part, he had never felt his spirit in the least oppressed by velvet hangings, gilded furniture, or French cookery. Whereas to be obliged to wear shabby gloves would have been a kind of "trammel" he would strongly have objected to. In a word, he desired to be luxuriously comfortable always. And he consistently—albeit, perhaps, mistakenly, for the cleverest of us are liable to error—endeavoured to be so.

Therefore he did not ship himself aboard an emigrant vessel for the United States; nor did he even cross the Channel to Calais; but found himself in a corner of the mail-coach on the night after Jack Price's supper party, bowling along, not altogether unpleasantly, towards Whitford. He had not seen Lord Seely again. He had inquired for him at his house, and had been told that his lordship was worse; was confined to bed entirely; and that Dr. Nokes had called in two other physicians in consultation. "Deuce of a job if he dies before I get a berth!" thought Algernon. But before he had gone many yards down the street, he was in a great measure reassured as to that danger, by seeing Lady Seely in her big yellow coach, with Fido on the seat beside her, and her favourite nephew lounging on the cushions opposite. The nephew had been apparently entertaining Lady Seely by some amusing story, for she was laughing (rather to the ear than the eye, as was her custom; for my lady made a great noise, sending out "Ha-ha-has!" with a kind of defiant distinctness, whilst all the while eyes and mouth plainly professed themselves disdainful of too cordial a hilarity, and ready to stop short in a second), and stroking Fido very unconcernedly with one fat, tightly-gloved hand. Now, although Algernon did not give my lady credit for much depth of sentiment, he felt sure that she would, for various reasons, have been greatly disquieted had any danger threatened her husband's life, and would certainly not have left his side to drive in the park with young Reginald. So he drew the inference that my lord was not so desperately ill as he had been told, and that the servants had had orders to give him that account in order to keep him away—which was pretty nearly the fact.

"The old woman would be in a fury with me when my lord told her he had promised me that post without consulting her," thought Algernon; "and would tell any lie to keep me out of the house. But we shall beat her this time." As he so thought, he pulled off his hat and made so distinguished and condescending a bow to my lady, that her nephew, who was near-sighted and did not recognise Errington, pulled off his own hat in a hurry, very awkwardly, and acknowledged the salute with some confused idea that the graceful gentleman was a foreigner of distinction; whilst my lady, turning purple, shook her head at him in anger. All which Algernon saw, understood, and was immensely diverted by.

In summing up the results of his journey to town, he was satisfied. Things were certainly not so pleasant as they might be. But were they not better, on the whole, than when he had left Whitford? He decidedly thought they were; which did not, of course, diminish his sense of being a victim to circumstances and the Seely family. Anyway he had broken with Whitford. My lord must get him out of that! The very thought of leaving the place raised his spirits. And, as he had the coach to himself during nearly all the journey, he was able to stretch his legs and make himself comfortable; and he awoke from a sound and refreshing sleep as the mail-coach rattled into the High-street and rumbled under the archway of the "Blue Bell."

The hour was early, and the morning was raw, and Algernon resolved to refresh himself with a hot bath and breakfast, before proceeding to Ivy Lodge. "No use disturbing Mrs. Errington so early," he said to the landlord, who appeared just as Algernon was sipping his tea before a blazing fire. "Very good devilled kidneys, Mr. Rumbold," he added condescendingly. Mr. Rumbold rubbed his hands and stood looking half-sulkily, half-deferentially at his guest. His wife had said to him, "Don't you go chatting with that young Errington, Rumbold; not if you want to get your money. I know what he is, and I know what you are, Rumbold, and he'll talk you over in no time."

But Mr. Rumbold had allowed his own valour to override his wife's discretion, and had declared that he would make the young man understand, before he left the "Blue Bell," that it was absolutely necessary to settle his account there without delay. And the result justified Mrs. Rumbold's apprehension; for Algernon Errington drove away from the inn without having paid even for the breakfast he had eaten there that morning, and having added the vehicle which carried him home to the long list beginning "Flys: A. Errington, Esq.," in which he figured as debtor to the landlord of the "Blue Bell." He had flourished Lord Seely in Mr. Rumbold's face with excellent effect, and was feeling quite cheerful when he alighted at the gate of Ivy Lodge.

It was still early according to Castalia's reckoning—little more than ten o'clock. So he was not surprised at not finding her in the drawing-room or the dining-room. Lydia, of whom he inquired at length as to where her mistress was, having first bade her light a fire for him to have a cigar by, before going to the office—Lydia said with a queer, half-scared, half-saucy look, "Laws, sir, missus has been out this hour and a half."

"Out!"

"Yes, sir. She said as how she couldn't rest in her bed, nor yet in the house, sir. Polly made her take a cup of tea, and then she went off to Whit-meadow."

"To Whit-meadow! In this damp raw weather, at nine o'clock in the morning!"

"Please, sir, me and Polly thought it wasn't safe for missus, and her so delicate. But she would go."

Algernon shrugged his shoulders and said no more. Before the girl left the room, she said, "Oh, and please, sir, here's some letters as came for you," pointing to a little heap of papers on Castalia's desk.

Left alone, Algernon drew his chair up to the fire, and lit a cigar. He did not hasten himself to examine the letters. Bills, of course! What else could they be? He began to smoke and ruminate. He would have liked to see Castalia before going to the office. He would have liked to make his own representation to her of the story he had told Lord Seely. She must be got to corroborate it unknowingly if possible. He reflected with some bitterness that she had lately shown so much power of opposing him, that it might be she would insist on taking a course of conduct which would upset all the combination he—with the help of chance circumstances—had so neatly pieced together. And then he reflected further, knitting his brows a little, that at any cost she must be prevented from spoiling his plans; and that her conduct lately had been so strange that it wouldn't be very difficult to convince the world of her insanity. "'Gad, I'm almost convinced of it myself," said Algernon, half aloud. But it was not true.

The fire was warm, the room was quiet, the cigar was good, the chair was easy. Algernon felt tempted to sit still, and put off the moment when he must re-enter the Whitford Post-office. He shuddered as he thought of the place with a kind of physical repulsion. Nevertheless, it must be faced once or twice more. Not much more often, he hoped. He rose up, put on a great-coat, and said to himself lazily as he ran his fingers through his hair in front of the looking-glass, "Where the devil can Castalia have gone mooning to?" Then he turned to leave the room. As he turned his eyes fell on the little heap of letters. He took them up and turned them over with a grimace.

"H'm! Ravell—respectful compliments. Ah! no; your mouth ought to have been stopped, I think! But that's the way. More they get, more they want. Never pay an instalment. Fatal precedent! What's this—a lawyer's letter! Gladwish. Oh! Very well, Mr. Gladwish. Nous verrons. Chemist! What on earth—? Oh, rose-water! Better than his boluses, I daresay, but not very good, and quite humorously dear. Extortionate rascal! And who are you, my illiterate-looking friend?"

He took a square blue envelope between his finger and thumb, and examined the cramped hand-writing on it, running in a slanting line from one corner to the other. It was addressed to "Mr. Algernon Errington." "Some very angry creditor, who won't even indulge me with the customary 'Esquire,'" thought Algernon with a contemptuous smile and some genuine amusement. Then he opened it. It was from Jonathan Maxfield!

CHAPTER LV.

In about a quarter of an hour after reading that letter, Algernon called to the servants to know if their mistress had come back. He did not ring as usual, but went to the door of the kitchen and spoke to both the women, saying that he was uneasy at Mrs. Errington's absence, and did not like to go to the office without seeing her. He said two or three times, how strange it was that his wife should have wandered out in that way; and plainly showed considerable anxiety about her. Both the women remarked how pale and upset their master looked. "Oh, it's enough to wear out anybody the way she goes on," said Lydia. "Poor young man! A nice way to welcome him home!"

"Ah," returned Polly, the cook, shaking her head, "I'm afraid there's going to be awful trouble with missus, poor thing. I believe she's half out of her mind with jealousy. Just think how she's been going on about Miss Maxfield. Why 'tis all over the place. And they say old Max is going to law against her, or something. But I can't but pity her, poor thing."

"Oh! they say worse of her than being out of her mind with jealousy," returned Lydia. "Don't you know what Mrs. Ravell's housemaid told her young man at the grocer's?" Et cetera, et cetera.

The discussion was checked in full career by their master returning to say that he should not go to the office until he had seen Mrs. Errington, and that he was then going to Whit-meadow to look for her. He went out past the kitchen and through the garden at the back of the house.

He looked about him when he got to the garden-gate. Nothing to be seen but damp green meadow, leaden sky, and leaden river. Where was Castalia? A thought shot into his mind, swift and keen as an arrow—had she thrown herself into the Whit? And, if she had, what a load of his cares would be drowned with her! He walked a few paces towards the town, then turned and looked in the opposite direction. For as far as he could see, there was not a human being on the meadow-path. His eyes were very good and he used them eagerly, scanning all the space of Whit-meadow within their range of vision. At length he caught sight of something moving among a clump of low bushes—blackberry bushes and dog-roses, a tangle of leafless spikes now, although in the summer they would be fresh and fragrant, and the holiday haunt of little merry children—which grew on a sloping part of the bank between him and the Whit. He walked straight towards it, and as he drew nearer, became satisfied that the moving figure was that of his wife. He recognised a dark tartan shawl which she wore. It was not bright enough to be visible at a long distance; but as he advanced he became sure that he knew it. In a few minutes the husband and wife stood face to face.

"This is a nice reception to give me," said Algernon, in a hard, cold voice, after they had looked at each other for a second, and Castalia had remained silent and still. In truth, she was physically unable to speak to him in that first moment of meeting. Her heart throbbed so that every beat of it seemed like an angry blow threatening her life.

"Why do you wander out alone in this way? Why do you conduct yourself like a mad woman? Though, indeed, perhaps you are not so wrong there; madness might excuse your conduct. Nothing else can."

"I couldn't stay in that house. I should have died there. Everything in every room reminded me of you."

She answered so faintly that he had to strain his ear to hear her, and her colourless lips trembled as the lips tremble of a person trying to keep back tears. But her eyes were quite dry.

Algernon was pale, with the peculiar ghastly pallor of a fresh ruddy complexion. His blue eyes had a glitter in them like ice, not fire; and there was a set, sarcastic, bitter smile on his mouth.

"Look here, Castalia; we had better understand one another at once. I shall begin by telling you what I have resolved upon, and what I have done, and you will then have to obey me implicitly. There must be no sort of discussion or hesitation. Come back to the house with me at once."

She shook her head quickly. "No! no! Tell me here—out here by ourselves, where no one can hear us. I cannot bear to go into that house yet."

"Pshaw! What intolerable fooling! Well, here be it. I have no time to waste. I have seen your uncle. Don't interrupt me! He has promised to get us out of this cursed place, and to find a post for me abroad as consul. I had to exercise a good deal of persistence and ability to bring him to that point, but to that point I have brought him. We must keep him to it, and be active. My lady will move heaven and earth—or t'other place and earth, which is more in her line—to thwart us. Now, when it is necessary to keep things here as smooth as possible, to arouse no suspicion that we may be off at a moment's notice, to hold out hopes of everything being settled by Lord Seely's help, what do I find? I find that you have gone to a man who is a creditor of mine, who is not over fond of me to begin with, and have grossly and outrageously insulted him and his daughter! Just as if you had ingeniously cast about for the most effectual means of doing me a mischief! I found this letter on the table. He threatens to ruin me, and he can do it. If my name is posted, my bills protested, and a public hullabaloo made about them and other matters, your uncle's influence will hardly suffice to get me the berth I want, in the face of the opposition newspapers' bellowing on the subject. Your uncle is but small beer in London at best. But that much he might have managed, if you hadn't behaved in that maniacal way."

"And how have you behaved? Oh, Ancram, Ancram, I would not have believed—I could not——" She burst into tears, and sank down on the damp grass, covering her face with her hands, and shaking with sobs.

"Listen, Castalia! Do you hear me?" said her husband, shaking her lightly by the arm.

She did not answer, but continued to cry convulsively, rocking herself to and fro.

Algernon stood looking down upon her with folded arms. "Upon my soul!" he said, after a minute, and with a contemptuous little nod of the head, which expressed an unbounded sense of the hopeless imbecility of the woman at his feet, and of his own long-suffering tolerance towards her, "Upon my life and soul, Castalia, I have never even heard of anyone so outrageously unreasonable as you are. Your jealousy—we may as well speak plainly—your jealousy has passed the bounds of sanity. But, as I told you, I am not going to argue with you. I am going to give directions for your guidance, since it is quite clear you are unable to guide yourself. In the first place——for God's sake stop that noise!" he cried, a sudden, fierce irritation piercing through his self-restraint. "In the first place, you must make a full, free, and humble apology to Rhoda Maxfield!"

Castalia started to her feet and confronted him. "Never!" she said. "I will never do it!"

"I told you I was not going to argue with you. I am giving you your orders. A full, free, and humble—very humble—apology to Rhoda Maxfield is our one chance of softening her father. And if you have any sense or conscience left, you must know that Rhoda richly deserves every apology you can make her."

"You think so, do you?"

"Yes; I think so. She is a thoroughly good and charming girl. The only crime she has ever committed against you is being young and pretty. And if you quarrel with every woman who is so, you will find the battle a rather unequal one." He could not resist the sneer. He detested Castalia at that moment. Her whole nature, her violence, her passionate jealousy, her no less passionate love, her piteous grief, her demands on some sentiment in himself, which he knew to be non-existent; every turn of her body, every tone of her voice, were at that moment intensely repulsive to him.

The poor thing was stung into such pain by his taunt that she scarcely knew what she said or what she did.

"Oh, I know," she cried, "that you care more for her than for me! A pink-and-white face, that's all you value! More than wife, or—or—anything in the world. More than the honour of a gentleman. She's a devil; a sly, sleek little devil! She has got your love away from me. She has made you tell lies and be cruel to me. But I'll expose her to all the world."

"What, in the name of all that's incomprehensible, has put this craze into your head against Rhoda Maxfield? It's the wildest thing!"

"Oh, Ancram! you can't deceive me any longer. I know—I have seen. She came on the sly to see you at the office. You used to go to her when you told me you had to be busy at the office. I watched you, I followed you all down Whitford High-street one night, and found out that you were cheating me."

"Ha! And you also opened my desk at the office, and took out letters and papers! Do you know what people are called who do such things?" said Algernon, now in a white heat of anger.

She drew back and looked at him. "Yes," she said, "I know."

"Have you no shame, then? No common sense? You attack a young lady—yes, a lady! A far better lady than you are!—of whom you take it into your head to be jealous, merely because she is pretty and admired by everybody. By me amongst the everybodies. Why not? I didn't lose my eyesight when I married you. You talk about my not loving you——! Do you think you go the way to make me do anything but detest the sight of you? You disgrace me in the town. You disgrace me before my clerk in the office. You and your relations persecuted me into marrying you, and now you haven't even the decency to behave like a rational being, but make yourself a laughing-stock, and me a butt for contemptuous pity in having tied myself to such a woman. One would have thought you would try to make some amends for the troubles I have been plunged into by my marriage."

She put her hands up one to each side of her head, and held them there tightly pressed. "Ancram," she said, "do you detest the sight of me?"

"You've tried your best to make me."

"Have you no spark of kindness or affection for me in your heart—not one?"

"Come, Castalia, let us have done with this! I thoroughly dislike and object to 'scenes' of any kind. You have a taste for them, unfortunately. What you have to do now is to do as I bid you, and try to make your peace by begging Rhoda's pardon, and so trying to undo a little of the mischief your insane temper has caused."

"Ancram, say one kind word to me!"

"Good Heavens, Castalia! How can you be so exasperatingly childish?"

"One word! Say you love me a little still! Say you did love me when you married me! Don't let me believe that I have been a miserable dupe all along."

She no longer refused point-blank to obey him. She was bending into her old attitude of submission to his wishes. His ascendancy over her was paramount still. But she had made herself thoroughly obnoxious to him, and must be punished. Algernon's resentments were neither quick nor numerous, but they were lasting. His distaste for certain temperaments was profound. Castalia's intensity of emotion, and her ungoverned way of showing it, roused a sense of antagonism in him, which came nearer to passion than anything he had ever felt. With the sure instinct of cruelty, he confronted her wild, eager, supplicating face, with a hard, cold, sarcastic smile, and a slight shrug. A blow from his hand would have been tender by comparison. Then he pulled out his watch and said, "How long do you intend this performance to last?" in the quietest voice in the world. And all the while he was in a white heat of anger, as I have said.

"Oh, Ancram! Oh, Ancram!" she cried. Then, with a sudden change of tone, she said, "Will you promise me one thing? Will you swear never to see Rhoda Maxfield again? If you will do that, I will—I will—try to forgive you."

"To forgive me! Then you really have lost your senses?"

"No; I wish I had! I would rather be mad than know what I know. But think, Ancram, think well before you refuse me! This one thing is all I ask. Never see or speak to her, or write to her again—not even when I am dead! Swear it. I think if you swore it you would keep to it, wouldn't you? This one poor thing for all I have borne, for all I am willing to bear. I'll take that as a proof that you don't love her best. I'll be content with that. I'll give up everything else in the whole world. Only do this one thing for me, Ancram; I beg it on my knees!"

She did, indeed, fall on her knees as she spoke, and stretched out her clasped hands towards him. For one second their eyes met, then he turned his way and said, as quietly as ever, "I am going to Mr. and Miss Maxfield at once, with the most effectual apology which could be offered to them—namely, that you are a maniac, and in any case not responsible for your actions, nor to be treated like a rational being."

She staggered up to her feet. "Very well," she gasped out, "then I shall not spare you—nor her. I have had a letter from my uncle. He has told me what you accused me of. I went to the office. That man there told me the same. The notes that I paid away to Ravell—you 'wondered'—you were 'uneasy!' Why, you gave me them yourself! Oh, Ancram, how could you have the heart? I wish I was dead!"

"I wish to God you were!"

She was standing close to the edge of the steep, slippery bank. When he said these words she staggered, and, with a little heart-broken moan, put out her hand to clutch at him, groping like a blind person. He shook off her grasp with a sudden rough movement, and the next instant she was deep in the dark ice-cold water!

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK II. CHAPTER II. AUDREY'S NARRATIVE. WROTTESLEY FOLK.

"I HAVE already said that my father had no liking for general society. I think he was a man who would have filled with credit a place in society of the best kind, whether that epithet be taken to qualify mind or manners. But he had no intimates so long as either Griffith or I could remember, and his reminiscences, when he occasionally, but very rarely, brought them out for his son's edification or entertainment, were all of a kind of life of which we had no knowledge, and of a class of persons with whom we had no association. My father had a very pleasant, fluent, and humorous way of talking; and it was always, even when I was quite a child, an immense pleasure to me to listen to his stories of his university career, and the life of the great world of London in which he had had a share for a long, and my mother for a shorter, time. He had known several, and seen almost all, of the great men of the time; and he had a calm, just, but not phlegmatic fashion of talking of men and events, which rendered his reminiscences as useful to one as lessons in history, while they were very much more interesting. For some reason or other—it may have been on account of his conveying to my mind that sense of failure of which I have already spoken—my father always seemed to me older than he really was. It was not by his face, nor was it by his figure, that the impression was conveyed; for the one was handsome and calm, and the other was upright and active—as, indeed, ought to have been the case at the time which I am just now trying to recall, for he was not much over fifty. It was his absent manner, and his attitude of a looker-on at life, I think, which, long before I tried to account for it, caused me to regard him as an old man, and to take his very quiet and monotonous life as a matter of course. My own life was quiet and monotonous also, but it had its pleasures; and Griffith, as it is the prerogative of the male sex to do, made his life for himself in its social sense. He was the best and kindest of brothers, then and always; but he was only a man after he ceased to be only a boy, and how could he have known that I had hardly anyone to talk to, or to listen to, except Miss Minnie Kellett, and that when my curiosity was aroused upon certain social subjects, I had to resort for its satisfaction to her imperfect knowledge and inflated sentiments? Not that we had not a few visitors at the Dingle House, and that some among their number were not persons of distinction in the quiet way of our quiet county;—the latter circumstance caused the Dingle House to be regarded with envy in certain quarters; but that I had no cousins, no school friends, no girl-companions, and the world outside my home was an 'enigma' without a 'word' for me.

"The distinction between people who were 'county' and people who were not, began to puzzle me rather early. We knew several who belonged to each category, but I soon learned that we were exceptional in this, and that the line was, in general, very strictly drawn. I had a good deal of fun in my nature, and it found food more toothsome than wholesome in the curiosity and interest betrayed by certain of our acquaintance, who were not 'county,' in the sayings and doings of certain others who were. I observed, too, that the curiosity and interest were never in the least reflected by the other side. Mrs. Lipscott, the wife of the prosperous land agent, who lived in the handsome white stone house opposite to Kindersley and Conybeare's back, took an unaccountable pleasure in hearing all the details of a visit from Lady Boscawen at the Dingle House; when Sir Thomas came over from Boscawen Court to have a chat with my father, she even liked to know about it; but I do not think kind, sleepy-headed Lady Boscawen was ever thoroughly aware of Mrs. Lipscott's existence. I dreaded Lady Boscawen's visits, because my father always sent for me to see her, and I had to come; and she always talked to me as if I were still a small child, long after I had reached the time of life at which a girl is most dexterously flattered by being treated as though she were much more than her actual age.

"I was too loyal to say so, but I could not help thinking if Mrs. Lipscott and her daughters only knew how tiresome Lady Boscawen was, they would not envy me, as it was quite evident they did, the honour of a visit from her once or twice in a month, and the dreary experience of spending the day at Boscawen Court, which I underwent about six times a year. When, however, the grand distinctions of county and not county became intelligible to me, I understood the nature of their sentiments better, and derived some rather ill-natured amusement from them. Were the frustrated ambitions and the small heartburnings of quiet and insignificant Wrottesley folk anything like, in kind, the larger motives, and the more noteworthy vexations, which influence people in more extended spheres of action? I was by no means uninfluenced myself by the prevailing sense of this grand distinction, though I laughed at the Lipscotts, and I entirely agreed with Laura, the eldest of the Lipscott girls, who would have given anything to live even so far out of Wrottesley as we lived, that with our freehold and antecedents we 'quite counted' as county people. For the estimate of this sublime position by Wrottesley folk had nothing to do with wealth. They prized and honoured that good thing also at its full worth; but the old régime had not yet passed away there, and though money meant much it did not mean everything.

"Mr. Lipscott's house was large, roomy, handsomely furnished, with the brightest windows, the whitest doorsteps, and the best burnished brass knocker in Wrottesley. It was situated in an excellent position in one of the best streets. If ever a gig might be taken to imply unblemished respectability, and to command the confidence of the public, the vehicle with shiny harness, silver axle-boxes, and admirably-fitting apron, which carried Mr. Lipscott about his various and lucrative business, was that representative article of property. The Misses Lipscott and their mother were well-dressed, well-fed, well-looking, well-treated females, and said to be permitted to 'make ducks and drakes' of the land agent's money if it pleased them. I have never known more complete types of middle-class prosperity and content than the Lipscott family at the time I am telling of; but they, or at least the female members, had a grievance. They pined for the delights of county society, and 'as things stood at present,' they could not hope to enjoy them.

"'As things stood at present' was a vague phrase, but one knew what it meant. If Mr. Lipscott were to 'retire,' or the Misses Lipscott were to marry into a social sphere above their own, the grievance might be removed. The former occurrence was exceedingly unlikely, for Mr. Lipscott loved his business and the profits of it, and was entirely satisfied with his proper sphere. Of the advent of the latter the Misses Lipscott lived in hope.

"My initiation into the mysteries of social science on this small scale remains in my memory as an amusing experience.

"'I'm sure,' said Mrs. Frost to me one day, after she returned from Wrottesley, where she had called upon an acquaintance, who was housemaid at Mr. Lipscott's, 'there's no pleasin' some people; and it's my opinion Mr. Lipscott don't ought to try. Money ain't regarded in that house no more than table beer; it's always on the tap. There's a set of drorin'-room curtains, good enough for any dook, and they're to be took down and cut up for back bed-rooms!'

"'Perhaps Mrs. Lipscott's tired of them, Frosty,' I ventured to suggest.

"'Tired of them, Miss Audrey?—tired of as lovely a set of ponceau as ever had gold cornices and black velvet borders to 'em in this world! She ought to be ashamed of herself if she is. Tired of them! Mr. Lipscott ought to be tired of humourin' her, and lettin' of her spend his money which he's earned hard, and her betters putting up with dimity. I don't think it can stand another washing this winter, and that's the truth.'

"Mrs. Frost examined the dimity curtain to which she was alluding ruefully, and applied herself to mending a hole in it, under protest. I understood now why she had talked of Mrs. Lipscott's extravagance, and her drawing-room curtains, in a way so unlike her usual discretion. The Dingle House was getting very shabby, and Frosty resented the fact, which she knew was not to be remedied. I had never thought about it before, but I began to observe our general shabbiness from that time forth, and quite correctly to associate Frosty's shortness of temper with a deficiency of money.

"Recalling this little incident the next time Miss Lipscott came to see me, and labouring under the difficulty which I usually experienced in finding anything to talk about to that young lady, I said I had heard that they had a new set of drawing-room curtains down from London, and that they were very handsome. My visitor's face darkened.

"'Oh yes, they are very handsome. I hope you and Mr. Griffith will come to our party at Christmas; you'll see how well they light up; that is, if Mr. Dwarris doesn't mind your meeting nobody except Wrottesley people. Ma ordered them to match Mrs. Delamere's, but I'm sure I don't see the good, and so I tell her. Window-curtains are no use, nor anything else, so long as you live actually in the town! And then, as to pa, he's perfectly unbearable. What do you think he said, when ma told him she had taken advantage of his letting her go with him to inspect the improvements at Culleton, the other day, to order curtains for our drawing-room like Mrs. Delamere's?'

"'I cannot guess, indeed. That they were too expensive?'

"'Not a bit of it. He didn't mind the price. I will do pa the justice to say that he is not mean about money. He said ma was a goose! The curtains would spoil the other furniture, and as Mrs. Delamere never entered any room in the house except his private office, the compliment would be thrown away upon her.'

"'And does she never call on your mamma?'

"'Never. She's very civil to pa, you know; but he's only her man of business, and Mrs. Delamere would not look at any but county people.'

"'I am sure she looks at the Misses Mallison, for I see her carriage there constantly, and they have only a little bit of a cottage; and people say they are very poor.'

"'So they are. Pa knows all about them. But then, you see, they're "county;" their nephew, Sir Rupert Mallison, is a great personage in Leicestershire, and they never had anyone belonging to them in business.'

"'Perhaps that accounts for the old ladies being so poor,' said I, sagely.

"'Ah, well, I don't think the money is worth much, if one has to put up with Wrottesley people all one's life. I wouldn't marry to have to live in Wrottesley, and among them, all the rest of my days—no, not for anything.' And then, after a contemplative pause, Miss Lipscott added, with seeming irrelevance: 'There's one comfort in marrying a military man—one may have to lead an unsettled kind of life, but one does get into society.'

"I think, even then, I knew the girl was talking arrant nonsense, and wondered how such silly notions had crept into the rational and comfortable life of the land agent's family. But I thought about what she had said for all that, and wondered whether it would be very dreadful to put up with Wrottesley, and Wrottesley people, always. Not that I need think of such a possibility. My mind was quite easy about myself; the heroic lover, with the ready-gathered laurels and the becoming scar, would, of course, settle that question for me.

"I suppose every woman could, if she would make the effort, recall her first 'grown-up' party, and most of its incidents. I know that I could; but to record them would be uninteresting. My first grown-up party was that identical Christmas entertainment, of which Miss Lipscott had given me a preliminary hint à propos of the new drawing-room curtains. Griffith and I went to the party, and I enjoyed, as one does enjoy, one's first experience of that kind of pleasure, whether it be taken in distinguished company or not. The occasion was specially marked by three distinct occurrences. My father took notice of my dress, which owed its success to a combination of the best efforts of Miss Minnie Kellett, Frosty, and myself—I remember every detail of it perfectly—

commended it and my looks freely, which was a wonderful novelty on his part, and an unspeakable delight to me. This was the first of the three occurrences in order of time.

"I had hardly entered the drawing-room, fluttered and happy, on the arm of a gentleman who had been introduced to me by Mrs. Lipscott, but whose name I had not caught, and taken my place in the quadrille which was being formed, before one of my innocent wishes was gratified. I had an opportunity of seeing Captain Simcox and Lieutenant Larkin 'near,' as I was accustomed to say to myself. The latter, with his partner, was vis-à-vis to myself and the individual whose name I did not know, and concerning whom I thought nothing, except that I hoped he knew the figures, and would not put me out. The former was standing beside Miss Lipscott, talking to her with that successful assumption of oblivion of all other existing objects which is a very early letter in the alphabet of flirtation.

"The sight made my heart beat quickly. Miss Minnie had been right when she prophesied that the delightful creatures would be here! They would be introduced to me, I felt sure of it. Miss Lipscott was very good-natured; she would certainly introduce them, and I should have the felicity of being talked to in that delightful, easy, absorbing way—so different from the tame, common manner of the Wrottesley people. I could hardly mind my dancing, though I considered it a duty to dance properly—and it really was not all lounging in those days—for wondering what he was saying to Miss Lipscott. No doubt he was telling her some thrilling story of war, peril, daring, glory, asking for her sympathy in some passage of a soldier's arduous but splendid career.

"Although I was aware of the allowance which ought to be made for the absence of uniform, and did not expect to find the military heroes of my fancy so incomparably superior to other people, when attired in ordinary evening dress, I certainly had formed loftier notions of the two young officers than the facts altogether justified, and I was forced to admit that my own partner was as good-looking as either of them. How I wished I had caught his name, or could find it out without asking him what it was plainly; and how embarrassing it was to try and talk to him, mind my dancing, and keep an eye on Miss Lipscott and her partner at the same time. But, after all, looks did not signify so much as manner, and what could be so charming as Captain Simcox's manner? Supposing he were to be introduced to me, and to ask me to dance with him — people did not say 'Give me this dance' in those days—would he talk to me just like that, in what I mentally called 'that bending way?' Should I look so very much as if I liked it, as Miss Lipscott looked? Presently I had an opportunity of overhearing some of Captain Simcox's communications to Miss Lipscott, the thrilling tale of battle, or the whisper of ambition which he was pouring into her ear, when I found myself close beside them, after the quadrille came to an end.

"'I have noticed there's always one unpopular man at a picnic, haven't you, Miss Lipscott? And I am always determined that I will not be that man. Don't you think I'm right?'

"'Oh, Captain Simcox, I shouldn't think there was ever any danger of such a thing.'

"How soft Maria's voice had grown all of a sudden, I thought, and I had never seen her eyes with that nice, shy look in them before.

"'Ah well; everybody is not as kind as you are, and so I take precautions. They're very simple. I never go to a picnic without a smelling-bottle, a corkscrew, and a little parcel of salt in my pocket.'

"'What funny things to carry about! Why do you?'

"'That's just it, you see. Either there's no salt and no corkscrew forthcoming, and I am suddenly recognised as the benefactor of the whole party, or I choose my ground, establish myself by the side of the wisest people, and share my treasures with them, which gives them an immediate sense of superiority to the remainder of the company. So, either way, I am rather a favourite.'

"'And the smelling-bottle, Captain Simcox? That, I suppose, you offer to the prettiest young lady of the party, and——'

"'No, indeed!' protested the captain, eagerly. 'I merely take it with me in case any of the old ladies should be overdone with—the heat, you know, or if there's any shrieking about. As for pretty young ladies, I assure you, Miss Lipscott, I——'

"At this point the captain adopted the bending way still more decidedly, and his words became inaudible to me.

"Later in the evening he was introduced to me, and he did ask me to dance. I danced with him, and, to my profound surprise, I did not care at all about it. I actually ventured to think Captain Simcox stupid; to let myself feel tired of his talk; and to be glad when our dance was over. I hoped I was not going to be a fickle person; but I felt rather afraid of myself on that point, and was reminded, by the incident of that evening, of a painful moment in my childhood, when I discovered by anatomical investigation, conducted by means of a large pin and a pair of scissors, that the internal arrangements of my favourite doll were formed of bran; and that her beautiful black eyes were beads, which, on being poked, fell back into an empty space. This confronting of romance with reality, to the destruction of the former, is the second of the three recollections which come distinctly to me, connected with my first grown-up party.

"It was a clear frosty night, and the sky was crowded with stars. Griffith and I were to walk home; and the preparations for the start were very pleasant and fussy. Some other people meant to walk home also, distances were not great at Wrottesley, and manners were simple, and we were quite a merry party of girls in the little room where the cloaks had been put, getting ourselves wrapped up. How well I remember it all, how Griffith put his head in at the door to see whether I was ready, and caught me looking in the glass, to try the effect of someone else's hood; and how two or three of us exchanged confidences respecting Miss Lipscott and Captain Simcox, and agreed that he had been 'very particular indeed' that evening, and that she had been 'completely taken up with him.' Where were the pangs of vague jealousy I ought to have felt, and should no doubt have felt, had I never seen Captain Simcox 'near?' They never made themselves felt, and I never missed them. I record the Simcox episode, because a certain person will persist in alluding to the captain as my first love, and I wish to explain the matter. Quite a little crowd of us found ourselves in the street, outside Mr. Lipscott's house, together, and then we broke up into parties, according to the direction in which we were severally going. I had taken a comfortable hold of Griffith's arm, and was walking briskly on with him, when a man, having shaken hands with some of the others, and turned away from them, came up with us, and addressing Griffith, said:

"'Our way is the same: may I join you?'

"The speaker was my partner in the first quadrille.

"Griffith assented, and Mr. Lester—Griffith whispered his name to me, in reply to an interrogative squeeze of his arm—walked with us, by Griffith's side, in the direction of the Dingle House. The walk was very pleasant; the keen cold air, the steel-blue heavens, the quiet streets of the old town, so silent in the bright moonlight, which touched them up with a picturesque effect they did not boast by daylight; the hilarity of the little party—we had not danced to the dead-beat point—the sense which I thoroughly enjoyed that I was grown up now, and had 'come out' after our quiet fashion; the fact that this walk was an unusual thing, done at an unusual time—all these combined to make the little event charming to me. I had not noticed Mr. Lester particularly in the dancing-room, but as I glanced at him now, across Griffith, who talked pleasantly with him, and did not think it necessary to include me in the conversation—which is a way one's menkind have—I thought him decidedly better-looking than Captain Simcox. Mr. Lester was a young man, though a good deal older than Griffith, with a somewhat serious air and a very refined and pleasant voice. He was nearly as tall as Griffith, and had a slight figure and dark complexion. I gathered from their conversation that he and my brother had met a few times before.

"Our way lay through the street in which Mrs. Kellett's house stood, and as we reached the door, Griffith paused. Mr. Lester bade us good night; and, though I never could tell how the impression came to me that he would have liked to walk to the Dingle House with us—small hours and frosty night notwithstanding—it did come strongly, as he shook hands with Griffith and then with me. We left him on the doorstep, and not until we reached the corner of the street did the click of his latch-key in the door catch my ear in the frosty stillness. He was looking after us.

"'Mr. Lester is rather a nice fellow,' said Griffith, as we stepped out briskly.

"'Who is he? I never saw him before.'

"'No, by-the-by, I suppose you did not. He is Harper's new partner; he has bought a share in the doctor's practice, and he has taken Mrs. Kellett's rooms.'

"'Oh; then Mr. Lester is the new "inmate" Miss Minnie talks about?'

"'He must be. He seems to be a capital fellow. Lady Olive Despard swears by him.'

"This is the third recollection that comes back to me from the time of my first grown-up party."

THE COLUMBINE QUESTION.

In the year 1810 there was riot, almost revolution indeed, at the Surrey Theatre. The establishment had but lately acquired that title at the hands of Elliston, its manager; for years it had been known as the Royal Circus, and devoted to exhibitions of horse-riding, feats of strength and agility. Elliston designed its conversion to better uses. He was an exile from Drury-lane; Charles Lamb, likening him and his fallen state to a real imperial monarch in misfortune, described the Olympic as his Elba. In that case the Surrey Theatre was his St. Helena.

But what induced the rising of the dwellers in St. George's-fields against their manager? In what had he offended them? Well, he had produced a Christmas pantomime, and desirous that spirit, liberality, and enterprise should distinguish his direction of the Surrey Theatre, he had secured the services of, and introduced to his audience, two columbines. Lambeth resented the innovation; and wrath and violence prevailed in the neighbourhood.

It was not so much that he had trespassed against the prescriptions of pantomime. The two columbines, be it understood, did not appear upon the same evening. The ladies shared the part, assuming it alternately. But then each had her admirers, her adherents, and supporters; and the presence of one columbine upon the stage involved the absence from it of the other. Hence the heroine who chanced to adorn the scene, if applauded by her friends, was not the less, but rather the more, assured of being hissed by the followers of her rival. By a section of the spectators, each dancer was in turn viewed as a usurper of dignities and graces of a truth the possessions of another—as a counterfeit columbine, a creature of inferior quality, endeavouring to obtain currency and acceptance to the prejudice of lawfulness and right. Much commotion and angry turmoil ensued.

The first columbine was a Miss Giroux, a sparkling brunette, young, graceful, intelligent, and of foreign origin, the daughter, it was stated, of Gabriel Giroux, a ballet master, and chief dancer of the opera houses of Paris and London. She had been received with extraordinary applause when she first appeared upon the Surrey stage. Her personification of the part was pronounced to be most admirable by a numerous body of Mr. Elliston's friends and patrons.

Miss Taylor was also a member of the company: a beautiful blonde, of sylphide proportions, with golden hair and blush-rose cheeks, a dancer of singular skill. Elliston saw no reason why blonde and brunette should not by turns occupy his stage. There was need for neither to yield the prize; like old Timotheus and St. Cecilia, they might "both divide the crown." Columbine might one night appear with a complexion of peach-blossom, and the next with a skin of olive darkness. Why not? The manager's will was law. His instructions were carried out strictly, and one night Miss Taylor danced as columbine in the place of Miss Giroux. But Mr. Elliston had reckoned without his audience.

The friends of Miss Giroux flocked to the theatre, and secured possession of the best positions in pit, boxes, and gallery. No sooner did the new columbine present herself upon the scene, than she was greeted with cries of "Off! off!" with loud demands for "Giroux! Giroux!" For the moment the adherents of Miss Taylor were taken by surprise; they were unprepared for so violent a demonstration, and they were outnumbered by their opponents. But soon they were roused to the combat; they rallied round the offended dancer, and raising the watch-cry of "Taylor!" sought to outroar the riotous Girouxites, to drown their great uproar in a still greater. Then followed insulting gestures, angry words, and at last blows. The pit was divided as by a civil war; the strife raged long and fiercely. "The very building was shaken to its base," records the biographer of Elliston. "The opposing parties sprang on the benches and crowded on the parapets of the boxes, giving the clearest indication that they were prepared for any result." Then Elliston presented himself to the audience, and endeavoured to make a speech. He was always of opinion that much, very much, could be accomplished by means of a speech: that it was a panacea in all managerial emergencies; and he greatly praised himself upon his oratorial gifts and graces. But upon this occasion, if he even obtained a hearing, he failed to re-establish peace and good-humour. "The honeyed words of Ulysses were here of no avail. Like the Pythian responses, his words were ambiguous, and his promises unsatisfactory. Still more exasperated were both parties, and the curtain fell amidst universal confusion." Indeed, the manager was in a position of some difficulty. How could he appease an audience that would not be content with things as they were, nor with the withdrawal from the performance of both or either of the dancers? There was embarrassment confronting him, let him turn whichever way he would.

On the following night the disturbance was renewed with even an increase of violence. The admirers of Miss Taylor attended with reinforcements. Eagerness for the fray was exhibited upon both sides; and now leaders were chosen by the rival forces, to conduct them to victory or defeat, as the case might be. One Thomas Barratt headed the Taylorites; the Girouxites placed themselves under the direction of a certain Michael Slater. The prescriptions of the great O. P. riot were mimicked. The admirers of Miss Giroux displayed her initial G; a giant T appeared upon the hats of Miss Taylor's friends. Night after night hostilities were carried on with equal violence and improving method. As each lady arrived in her hackney-coach at the stage-door, she was received with the uproarious cheers of her partisans. As at a borough election, the public-houses of the precinct seemed to choose sides in quarrel, to espouse the cause and to display the colours of one or other of the two columbines. "Placards, handbills, pasquinades, and acrostics were in merry circulation, while an itinerant song, founded on The Rival Queens, collected a roaring auditory around the Obelisk." Miss Giroux even found it necessary to address the public in her own name, and on her own behalf. Her manifesto was as follows:

"Surrey Theatre.

"Miss Giroux, deeply deploring the display of a spirit in this theatre which, however flattering, is by no means calculated to serve her, who is the object of it, presumes publicly to declare that she has neither personally nor otherwise encouraged any hostility to the professional pretensions of a young person called Taylor; nor has she acted in any way which might tend to lower herself from her high elevation in public opinion.

"Miss Giroux takes the liberty to request that the enlightened portion of the British public which does her the honour to approve her performances, will add to so proud a distinction the favour of abstaining from all unseemly contest, nor

Mix with hired slaves, bravoes, and common stabbers;

but allow, at once, Mind to triumph over Matter.

"N.B. Miss Giroux is not aware that in this generous nation it is disreputable to be either a Jew or a foreigner; but attempts having been made to fix on her the stigma of both, she hopes it will not be deemed impertinent to state that she is neither. Miss Giroux is by no means a Jew, and has the happiness, moreover, of being born an English young lady."

Meanwhile, surprise was felt at the inactivity of the manager, who was not a man wont to be still upon occasions of strife. The tumult continued nightly, and yet Mr. Elliston made no sign. The fact is, the disturbance paid; the theatre was crowded, for it was felt that if one party abated its zeal, victory might forthwith be snatched by the other. But at length Mr. Elliston resolved upon interposing: he desired to be like the dignitary presiding over the tournaments, who could stay the conflict by the simple act of flinging his truncheon into the lists; or, possibly, he was of opinion that the excitement might be profitably sustained and fortified by his appearance upon the scene. So with native pomposity he informed his patrons that, deprecating the continuance of hostilities, he had constituted himself umpire, and that with a view to the restoration of peace, he would himself, upon a specified evening, "give judgment in the case." The house was very full, the audience for the moment were still; not indisposed to be mischievous, but content to wait and observe what might be the conduct of their manager. Presently he entered; very majestic of aspect, and solemnly judicial of air, yet nevertheless suffused of countenance, and indeed not altogether so sober as could be wished. "He turned towards the prompter," records a witness of the incident, "and with dignity which was positively superlative, exclaimed, 'Bring me a chair!' This demand was followed by a burst of merriment from the auditory, and when, obedient to the order, the prompter appeared, bearing in a stately arm-chair, into which the manager sank with the severity of a Wedderburn, it was, perhaps, the most powerful stroke of burlesque ever witnessed."

But things had gone too far. The audience had been too much in earnest to submit to Mr. Elliston's mock-administration of justice. Very angry feeling had been imported into the conflict, and pacification could not proceed from the eccentric judgment pronounced by the manager. The spectators were probably the more dissatisfied in that they now felt insulted by Mr. Elliston's light and ludicrous manner of treating them and their grievances. The contest was renewed with enhanced acrimony. The benches were torn up, the chandeliers seriously damaged; and as neither force could claim a victory over the other, they made common cause, and joined in pillaging the house. The manager was at length brought to his senses; authority interfered. Certain of the more prominent rioters, including Messrs. Slater and Barratt, were arrested, and it was decided that all further litigation concerning the two columbines should be confined to the legitimate tribunals of the country. The Attorney-General applied to the Court of King's Bench for a rule to show cause why a criminal information should not be filed against the leaders of the fray at the Surrey Theatre. The case duly came on for trial. The two columbines and their partisans appeared before the judges—Sir Vicary Gibbes and Lord Ellenborough. The offenders were convicted. But it was felt, no doubt, that the absurdity of the whole matter was too glaring, and that the columbines' friends could not be seriously dealt with as criminals. How the case was finally settled, the following document will disclose:

"Surrey Theatre.

"Whereas, a criminal information has been filed in the Court of King's Bench, against us, the undersigned, Michael D. Slater, of the parish of Lambeth, and Thomas E. Barratt, of the same place, for the part taken by us in the riotous proceedings which occurred at the Surrey Theatre, in the months of May and June last, under which we now stand convicted, and are liable to be called upon to receive judgment; and whereas Mr. Elliston, the proprietor of the said theatre, has declined to accept any payment from us towards compensating him for the heavy expense which he has incurred, and the serious loss which he has suffered, by such riotous proceedings, but has, at our entreaty, consented to abstain from bringing us up to receive the sentence of the court, on condition:

"First—That we should make a public acknowledgement of our sorrow for such offence; and,

"Secondly—That we should subscribe a sum of money to the fund for the relief of the distressed Portuguese, in the following proportions:—that is, that I, Michael D. Slater, should so subscribe one hundred and five pounds; and I, Thomas E. Barratt, twenty-one pounds.

"Now, in pursuance of such conditions, we do hereby publicly express our deep and sincere contrition for the offence of which we have been guilty, as well by the disturbance of the respectable audiences collected at the said theatre, as by the injury done to the property and profits of the proprietor; and we do declare ourselves in a high degree obliged to Mr. Elliston for the forbearance by which he has relieved us from the severe consequences which might have followed the imprudences we have committed. "M. D. Slater.
"T. E. Barratt.

"25 May, 1811.

"W. E. Allen, New Bridge-street,
"Solicitor for Prosecutor.
"Samuel Vines, Lincoln's-inn,
"Solicitor for the Defendant Slater."

So the great columbine conflict was brought to an end. Clamour was silenced; and thenceforward the friends of each dancer were mute and kept the peace. Miss Taylor no longer danced to the unmusical accompaniment of hoots and noises; and Miss Giroux was no more charged, by the illiberal and ill-natured, with being "a Jew." Nor was she driven to the courses adopted in another case—to manifest disconnection with the Hebrew nation. The maiden name of Mrs. Bland, a very popular actress and ballad singer, of sixty years since, was Romanzini, and she was in truth of Jewish origin. But seeing that she was a great favourite with the Liverpool people, before whom her first appearance was made, and among whom were many Roman Catholics, "the mother of the vocalist, for the purpose of persuading the inhabitants of Liverpool that her daughter was not of Judah, compelled her to sit at her open window on every

Saturday, occupied with needlework; and in addition to this she was usually sent by her politic parent into the public market to buy a pig! and was compelled to carry it home herself, to give further confirmation as to this desirable point. To such an extent did the mother employ this sort of evidence, that, in the instance of her daughter taking a benefit, an advertisement announced that tickets were to be had at Miss Romanzini's residence, and also at a pork butcher's, near the market."

In the dramatic essays of Hazlitt, frequent mention is made of certain Miss Dennetts —three in number—dancers for whose performances the distinguished critic had conceived very great admiration. Indeed, he writes of the young ladies in glowing and exuberant terms, that seem scarcely becoming, his judicial position being considered, although, of course, his expressions are not to be interpreted literally, and a consciousness of hyperbole is obviously present with him even in his loftiest flights. He describes their "weaving the airy, harmonious, liquid dance," and holds that "such figures, no doubt, gave rise to the fables of ancient mythology, and might be worshipped. They revive the ideas of classic grace, life, and joy. They do not seem like taught dancers, columbines and figurantes, on an artificial stage; but come bounding forward like nymphs in vales of Arcady, or, like Italian shepherdesses, join in a lovely group of easy gracefulness, while 'vernal airs attune the trembling leaves' to their soft motions. . . . To deny their merit or criticise their style is to be blind and dead to the felicities of art and nature. Not to feel the force of their united charm (united and yet divided, different and yet the same) is not to see the beauty of 'three red roses on a stalk,' or of the mingled hues of the rainbow, or of the halcyon's breast reflected in the stream, or the witchery of the soft blue sky, or grace in the waving of the branch of a tree, or tenderness in the bending of a flower, or liveliness in the motion of a wave of the sea. We shall not try to defend them against the dancing-school critics, &c.," and so on. There is much more of the same sort, the subject being often returned to, for a critic advancing opposite opinions had presumed to call Hazlitt to account for his excesses; and so something of a debate was carried on touching the merits of these three Miss Dennetts. Hazlitt's opponent wrote under the signature of Janus Weathercock and Vinkebooms, being in truth Thomas Griffith Wainwright, subsequently infamous as a forger and a poisoner. If Hazlitt pretended to enthusiasm and ecstasy he did not really feel, Wainwright in his turn affected an extravagance of genteel apathy and dandified languor. There was thus a sufficient contrast between the writings of the two critics who were both contributors to the same magazine. Hazlitt derides his rival as a Sir Piercie Shafton, a euphuist, a fine gentleman wearing diamond-rings on his fingers, antique cameos in his breast-pins, pale lemon-coloured kid gloves, and carrying cambric pocket-handkerchiefs that "breathe forth Attargal;" who runs away from vulgar places and people as from the plague; swoons at the mention of the Royal Coburg; mimics his barber's pronunciation of "Ashley's," and is afraid to trust himself at Sadler's Wells, lest his clothes should be covered with gingerbread, and spoiled with the smell of gin and tobacco. Wainwright had stated in his fantastic way, what seems to have been the truth, that the Misses Dennett, so admired of Hazlitt, were but dancers of the third class, accustomed to appear in very inferior places of entertainment, and somewhat vulgarised in consequence. Wainwright's contributions to the London Magazine, with all their coxcombry, won the applause of such eminent authors and critics as Lamb and De Quincey, the latter expressing warm admiration, not of the manner of his judgments upon æsthetic topics, for that "overflowed with levities and impertinence, but for the substance of his opinions in those cases where I happened to have had an opportunity of judging for myself." Even Hazlitt wrote of his critical opponent, as "his friend and correspondent," "his friend and coadjutor of the whimsical name." There is good reason to believe, indeed, that the debate touching the merits of the Misses Dennett, for all its air of independence and earnestness, was really a matter of arrangement and premeditation between the two critics, carried out with the full consent of the proprietor of the magazine in which their cross-fire correspondence appeared. A postscript to a letter addressed by Hessy the publisher to Hazlitt contains the significant words: "I think Vinkebooms will have no objection to play his part in the controversy." Of course other matters and of a later date may here be referred to; but suspicion is nevertheless justified in regard to the genuineness of the discussion regarding the Misses Dennett.

Altogether there have been, perhaps, fewer conflicts and tumults in the theatre attributable to the ballet-dancers than to other influences. The case of the two columbines stands, indeed, almost alone; and, as we have seen, the difficulties then arose, less from the conduct of the ladies most concerned, than from the irrepressible zeal of their admirers. But the professors of dancing have always possessed in a remarkable degree the power of inspiring enthusiasm on their behalf, and, in such wise, constraining their followers and admirers to do very foolish things. What imbecilities have been indulged in by way of rendering homage to a Camargo, a Guimard, a Taglioni, an Ellsler, or a Duvernay! It is to be said, however, that the queens of the dance wield far less power than once they did. The stars of the ballet have declined into luminaries of inferior magnitude, and shine now with but a subdued and diminished light. What the late Mr. Lumley, during his management of the Opera House, describes as "the culminating point in the history of the ballet in England" was arrived at thirty years ago. It was as the grand feu de joie which terminates an exhibition of fireworks. "The excitement crossed the Channel. Foreign papers circulated histories and descriptions of its wonders. Foreign courts received, along with official despatches, detailed accounts of its extraordinary captivations. It was literary a European event."

This was the Pas de Quatre—the appearance in combination of the four distinguished dancers Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, Cerito, and Lucille Grahn. The difficulties in the way of the achievement were very great. Material obstacles could be overcome by means of energy and expenditure. "When it was feared that Carlotta Grisi would not be able to leave Paris in time to rehearse and appear for the occasion, a vessel was chartered from the Steam Navigation Company to waft the sylph at a moment's notice across the Channel; a special train was engaged and ready at Dover; relays of horses were in waiting to aid the flight of the danseuse, all the way from Paris to Calais." But there were perplexities of a more sentimental sort that could not be so readily disposed of. "Every twinkle of each foot in every pas had to be nicely weighed in the balance, so as to give no preponderance. Each danseuse was to shine in her own peculiar style and grace to the last stretch of perfection; but no one was to outshine the others, except in her own individual belief." Everything was at length adjusted. The rehearsals commenced—proceeded. The Pas de Quatre was advertised, the time was drawing near for its accomplishment, when Perrot, the ballet dancer, wild and desperate, rushed to announce that all was over—the Pas de Quatre could not be presented! The ladies could not agree as to the order of their appearance upon the scene, in the execution by each in turn of a separate pas. The place of honour, the last in such cases as in regal processions, had been ceded without overmuch hesitation to Mdlle. Taglioni. The other ladies, claiming to be equal in gifts, graces, and popularity, all desired to be last but one. No one would consent to appear before the other. "Mon dieu!" cried the ballet master in agonised tones, "Cerito ne veut pas commencer avant Carlotta, ni Carlotta avant Cerito, et il n'y as pas moyen de les faire bouger; tout est fini!" The impresario pronounced judgment with the wisdom of a Solomon. "The question of talent must be decided by the public. But in this dilemma there is one point on which I am sure the ladies will be frank. Let the eldest take her indisputable right to the envied position!" The ladies tittered, blushed, laughed, and drew back. The danseuse is always sensitive on the subject of age. Each was now as disinclined towards the right of position as she had formerly been eager for it. The matter was left in M. Perrot's hands, who had little difficulty in arranging terms of peace; and the famous Pas de Quatre was in due course exhibited to the patrons of the Opera House, much to their delight if not their edification.

PIOUS PONIARDS.

In all times, and in all countries, great enterprises and great men have been brought to a sudden end by the dagger of a fanatic—that most terrible of enemies, who firmly believes his work to be acceptable in the sight of his God, and cheerfully gives up his life to achieve it, certain that his crime is a passport to paradise. Perhaps the most Christian view to take of a pious assassin is to write him down a madman at once; but, be he mad or not, he must never be confounded with a common assassin — a hired bravo. The latter is not a very dangerous person, at his boldest. He seeks to stab and run away, a difficult undertaking, against which protection is comparatively easy. He is but a pitiful scoundrel at the best, and when he makes his attempt and breaks down, as he generally does, is hardly worth a rope and the trouble of hanging him out of the way. The pious murderer is an entirely different person. He may be poor, ignorant, humble in station, but it is impossible to look contemptuously upon a man who is ready to die the moment his object is accomplished. There is no defence against him. Castles, armies, and body-guards are alike powerless to keep him off. He cares nothing for rank; the divinity which "doth hedge a king," proves but a poor barrier against the armed fanatic, who patiently bides his time to strike. Impelled ofttimes by a stronger will than his own, he knows neither hunger nor thirst until his fell purpose is accomplished, and then he is prepared to take the consequences, whatever they may be—instant death, or the long agony of exquisite torture.

Chief among the fanatical murderers of all ages are those who gave a new name to the worst form of homicide—the "Ashishin," followers of the "Old One," the Old Man of the Mountain, the Shaikh-ul-Jibal, who, as the story goes, administered a narcotic to the neophyte, and then translated him into a species of Mohammedan paradise, on returning from which he was prepared to kill anybody at the command of the supposed saint and prophet. The power of the Old Man of the Mountain, while he remained in his stronghold at Alamut, in Persia—whence he was at last routed by Hulaku, the Mongol—may be guessed from the enumeration of a few of the deeds which may be traced to the dynasty of Ashishin. A favourite spot for carrying out the designs of the Ashishin was the mosque itself, the character of the building acting as no kind of check upon these devout Musalmans. Early in the twelfth century they slew the Prince of Homs, in the chief mosque of that city; Maudúd, Prince of Mosul, in the chief mosque of Damascus; and Kasim Aksonkor, Prince of Mosul and Aleppo, in the great mosque at Mosul. Ahmed Yel, Prince of Maragha, was killed at Baghdad, in the presence of Mohammed, Sultan of Persia; and five years later, in 1121, the Amir Afdhal, the Wazir of Egypt, fell to the dagger of the Ashishin, at Cairo. Prime ministers were often victims to the Shaikh-ul-Jibal; even the khalifs — the Commanders of the Faithful—themselves were not secure. In 1129, Amir Billah, Khalif of Egypt, was assassinated, and was quickly followed to the grave by the Khalif Mostarshid and the Khalif Rashid.

In the crusading times, the hand of the Old Man smote Raymond, Count of Tripoli, and Conrad of Montferrat, titular King of Jerusalem. Two attempts were also made to murder the Great Saladin, and a century later the well-known dagger-thrust was dealt to Prince Edward of England, at Acre. At this latter date —1272—as Colonel Yule points out, the sect was already partially broken up. On the Mongol army invading the country held by the Ismaelites, or Ashishin, the reigning prince, Ala'uddin Mohammed was murdered, at the instigation of his son, Rhuknuddin Khurshah, who succeeded to a short-lived sovereignty—being compelled, at a year's end, to surrender to Hulaku, whose brother, Mangu Khan, forthwith had him put to death. About a hundred fortresses were surrendered, but it is said that two held out for a long time, one (Girdkuh) actually for fourteen years. The dominion of the assassins was extinguished, but the sect remained, though scattered, indeed, and obscure. Traces of them exist in Persia still. Early in this century, at least, their Shaikh resided at Yezd, and, more recently, Abbott mentions the sect as still existing in Kerman. The Bohrahs of Western India are said to be an offshoot of the Ismaelites.

Unhappily the knife of the fanatic has not always been confined to Musalman hands. Without dwelling on wholesale massacres like that on the Eve of St. Bartholomew, 1572, it is unhappily but too easy to find in western history instances of the readiness of religious enthusiasts to sacrifice their own lives to compass the destruction of an enemy. The knife of Felton struck down Buckingham in all his glory; as that of Jacques Clément despatched Henry the Third of France, at the moment when his alliance with Henry of Navarre assured his triumph over the League. Clément was duly prepared and tutored for his enterprise in oriental fashion: one Bourgoing, prior of the Jacobins at Paris, having played the part of a Christian Old Man of the Mountain, in exciting the young fanatic to the requisite pitch. Cut down and killed an instant after striking the fatal blow, the wretched monk was elevated into a saint by the thick and thin partisans of the League. The ally and successor of Henry of Anjou underwent a similar fate to that of the last of the Valois. Curiously enough, Henry of Navarre, like Julius Cæsar, and Henry of Guise, received a warning of his coming doom. On his return from hearing mass on the 14th May, 1610, the king entered his cabinet, whither came presently his natural son—the Duc de Vendôme, whom he greatly loved—with a story of how one La Brosse, a professional astrologer, had told him "that the constellation under which the king was born, menaced him with a great danger on that day, and that he should tell the king to be upon his guard." The king laughed, as he replied, "La Brosse is a cunning old sharper, who is after your money, and you are a young idiot to believe him. Our days are reckoned before God." The sequel is well known.

It is a narrow street of antique houses, with their pointed gables and overhanging brows. As the great lumbering coach, containing the king and his lords in waiting, rolls into the Rue de la Ferronnerie, there is a block occasioned by a wine cart and a load of hay. While this is being cleared, the running footmen leave the royal coach, and take a short cut through the Cemetery of the Innocents, to the other end of the street. Ravaillac—devout seer of visions—leaps on the coach, stabs the king once between the second and third rib, and again in the heart. A third stroke was aimed, but only damaged the sleeve of the Duke de Montbazon. The strangest part of the story is that the king's coach—a roomy vehicle after the fashion of the time—was full of lords in waiting, and yet not one of these saw the blow struck, so that, as L'Étoile remarks, "if the hellish monster had dropped his knife, no one would have known who did it. But he remained, as if to show himself, and glory in this the greatest of assassinations." The murderer, who denied to the last the existence of any accomplices, had intended to kill the king "between the two doors of the Louvre," but not succeeding in getting within reach of him, as he was stepping into his coach, followed him as we have seen, and actually poniarded him in his coach, in the midst of those who were supposed to watch over the royal person. The fact is, that against the fanatic, ordinary precautions are useless, as was shown only a short time since in India, in the case of Lord Mayo—a catastrophe which points distinctly, like the murder of Chief Justice Norman, to the existence of an exceptionally dangerous class among the disaffected Musalmans of Bengal. It is difficult to believe that either of these crimes was an act of mere private revenge—especially when we remember that among the prisoners at the Andaman Islands, where Lord Mayo was killed, was a prominent chief of those Wahábi sectaries—whose conspiracy, as exposed at the trials of the principal offenders, showed not only the possibility but the actual existence of a vast organisation of traitors. There is nothing to be gained by ignoring the fact, that in the hands of the Wahábi chiefs is the life of the heir-apparent of the English crown. If it seemed good to these wild enthusiasts to take his life, it would not be worth a day's purchase. At the command of the Khalif of the Wahábis the atmosphere of Bengal would be thick with daggers, one of which would certainly reach the popular prince, whose present incomings and outgoings are watched with such keen anxiety by his future subjects. Apprehensions for the safety of his royal highness have been increased by the demonstration, a fortnight since, that his person is by no means so well protected as was imagined. A native—armed, as it happened, only with a petition—pushed his way through policemen and guards, and succeeded in presenting the document to the prince. If this could be done with a petition, it could be done with a knife or a revolver. The telegram contained much nonsense about the "quick" eyes which saw the innocence of the man's intention; but whatever the eyes may have been, the hands, whose duty it was to protect the prince, were ridiculously slow; for, if everybody had done his duty, the indiscreet petitioner ought either to have been arrested or cut down before he got within reach of the Prince of Wales. Our only consolation is the knowledge that the Indian Musalmans are very well acquainted with all those departments of the English Government which affect themselves; and that they are, therefore, aware that any attempt, successful or otherwise, upon the life of the heir-apparent would certainly not improve their condition, and would, moreover, bring down hard measures upon the entire Musalman population. Perhaps the latter consideration would not affect the Wahábi chiefs very much; and we are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that the safety of his royal highness mainly depends upon the accurate knowledge of the English Constitution possessed by a few fanatical leaders of a fighting sect, and their possible objection to commit a useless crime.

So long ago as 1871, Dr. W. W. Hunter drew public attention — so far as it is possible to draw it to anything Indian — to the power of the Indian Wahábis, and the danger likely to spring at any moment from this combustible element in our Eastern Empire. A few years earlier, Mr. William Gifford Palgrave visited the Wahábi in the cradle of the sect in Eastern Arabia. Of the domestic government of the Wahábis, when they are at home and have it all their own way, the latter gentleman gives many amusing particulars. Before proceeding, however, to look at the Wahábi at home, it may be well to define as exactly as possible who and what he is, more particularly as it is not uncommon to speak of him as a Mohammedan Protestant or Reformer, which, although true in some measure, conveys an entirely false idea of his actual doctrine. A Mohammedan Puritan he certainly is, and something more. He is an extreme Dissenter, both religiously and politically; an Anabaptist, a Fifth-Monarchy man, so to speak, in matters of faith; a Communist and a Red Republican in politics. Following the example of other fanatics, he hates those near him in belief—the orthodox Musalmans — with a much greater hate than he vouchsafes to the Infidel. Revolutionist alike in politics and religion, he goes about his work less in the spirit of a reformer than of a destroyer, and is the terror of the obdurate Musalmans who cling to the recognised form of faith, and the loaves and fishes which attend it.

The founder of this remarkable sect was one Mohammed-ebn-'Abd-ul-Waháb, born in Horeymelah, somewhat before the middle of the last century. Descended from a powerful clan, he, like many Nejdeans of the better sort, began life as a travelling merchant. In the pursuit of business he visited Basrah and Baghdad, possibly also Persia and India, and at last made a considerable stay at Damascus, where he fell in with sundry shaikhs of great learning and bigotry. Listening attentively and thinking deeply, the young Arab learned from the lessons of these shaikhs to combine and crystallise, as it were, ideas that he had long entertained in a floating and unsystematised condition. He had learned to distinguish between the essential elements of Islam and its accidental or recent admixtures, and at last imagined himself possessed of a clear idea of primitive Mohammedanism—the starting-point of the prophet and his companions eleven centuries before. As Mr. Palgrave puts it, "the Wahábi reformer formed the design of putting back the hour-hand of Islam to its starting-point; and so far he did well, for that hand was from the first meant to be fixed. Islam is in its essence stationary, and was framed thus to remain. Sterile like its god, lifeless like its first principle and supreme original in all that constitutes true life—for life is love, participation, and progress, and of these the Koranic deity has none—it justly repudiates all change, all advance, all development. To borrow the forcible words of Lord Houghton, the 'written book' is the 'dead man's hand'—stiff and motionless; whatever savours of vitality is by that alone convicted of heresy and defection." In his main conception of the doctrine of the prophet, the Nejdean merchant was, without doubt, correct; but he forgot that cast-iron creeds must either adapt themselves to human nature or drop out of history. The doctrine of Mohammed was itself a reaction against idolatry, but was quickly overlaid by a mass of those pleasant superstitions, to which the imaginative people of southern climes cling with extreme tenacity. We recollect how the Jews, to whom was imparted the sublime idea of monotheism, found its awful grandeur too heavy for them to bear, and were for ever slipping back into worshipping the familiar, local, and, so to say, friendly gods, to whom they could address, as they imagined, their prayers with greater hope of success, than to the sublime Jehovah so far removed from human thoughts and cares. Mohammedanism has undergone a similar fate. It is true that in great part of Islam no actual worship of stocks and stones has crept in, but the place of these has been supplied by an army of Muslim saints, assumed, from their having themselves once been human, to be peculiarly fitted to act as mediators between distant, awful, unapproachable Allah and the true believer. All students of oriental literature—not being themselves Mohammedans—have been lashed into fury by the constant references on the part of Arabic writers to legions of saints, dervishes, and wearisome holy men of all kinds, and it requires no library of theological treatises to prove that all this worship of mediators is completely foreign to the spirit of the Koran.

In the country of the Wahâb there was all this degeneracy, and worse. Central Arabia was, in his time, divided among innumerable chiefs. Almost every trace of Islam had long since vanished from Nejd, where the worship of the Djann, under the spreading foliage of large trees, or in the cavernous recesses of Djebel Toweyk, along with the invocation of the dead and sacrifices at their tombs, was blended with "remnants of old Sabæan superstition, not without positive traces of the doctrines of Moseylemah and Kermoot." The Koran was unread, the five daily prayers forgotten, and no one cared where Mecca lay—east, west, north, or south; tithes, ablutions, and pilgrimages were unheard of. From this slough of degradation the Nejdeans were rudely awakened by the voice of the Wahâb, who, at first driven from spot to spot, at length found refuge with Ibn Sa'ud, the chief of Deraiyeh. Into this Bedouin leader he instilled his religious views, and a sense of his great wrongs. Moreover, he married his daughter, and made his father-in-law's stronghold a focus of religious enthusiasm and political revolt against the Ottoman Lord Paramount at Constantinople. Calling in the aid of that great instructor and purifier, the sword, the Wahâbi leaders brought a "conscience to their work," and every year added strength to their faction. They preached against the Turks, their debased theology and brutal sensuality, and, moreover, smote the offenders with the edge of the sword, and spoiled their caravans. The Turkish caravan to Mecca had long been infamous for debauchery of the vilest kind. What exasperated the belligerent saints quite as much was the open use of wine, opium, and tobacco in the holy streets themselves, and it was at first against these practical and visible defilements that the warlike reformer raised his voice. By degrees, however, was elaborated a theological system which may be defined as a reduction of the faith of Islam to a pure theism. This faith is now held by the Indian sect, and consists of seven great doctrines. First, absolute reliance upon one God; second, absolute renunciation of any mediatory agent between man and his Maker, including the rejection of the prayers of the saints, and even of the semi-divine mediation of Mohammed himself; third, the right of private interpretation of the Mohammedan scriptures, and the rejection of all priestly glosses on the Holy Writ; fourth, absolute rejection of all the forms, ceremonies, and outward observances with which the mediæval and modern Mohammedans have overlaid the pure faith; fifth, constant looking for the prophet (Imam), who will lead the true believers to victory over the infidels; sixth, constant recognition, both in theory and practice, of the obligation to wage war upon all infidels; seventh, implicit obedience to the spiritual guide. These principles, backed by the sword, spread rapidly. In 1791 the Wahâbis made a successful campaign against the Grand Shaikh of Mecca. In 1797 they beat back the Pasha of Baghdad with immense slaughter, and overran the most fertile provinces of Asiatic Turkey. In 1801 they again swept down upon Mecca with more than a hundred thousand men, and in 1803 the holy city fell into their hands. Next year they captured Medinah. In these two strongholds of Islam the victors, after the manner of their kind, massacred those of the inhabitants who refused to accept their creed, plundered and defiled the tombs of the Mohammedan saints, and spared not even the sacred mosque itself. Every devout king and emperor of Islam had sent thither the richest oblations which his realm could yield, and the accumulated offerings of eleven centuries were swept into the tents of the sectaries of the desert. The Wahâbis next overran Syria, but were at last crushed by Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt. In 1812 Thomas Keith, a Scotchman, under the pasha's son, took Medinah by storm; Mecca fell in 1813, and five years later, adds Dr. Hunter, "this vast power which had so miraculously sprung up, as miraculously vanished, like a shifting sand mountain of the desert."

The Wahâbis, crushed and scattered for a while, came speedily together again in their ancient stronghold Riad, described as being a veritable City of the Saints, in which purity of doctrine and a severe moral code are enforced, by devices which almost put the early days of Massachusetts to the blush. Riad is the capital of Nejd, and Arabia's very heart of hearts. Here the Puritans rule the people with a rod of iron. They not only tax them to the full tenth, and exact strict obedience and punctual attendance at the mosque, but place over them certain "men of zeal," to take account of slight moral derelictions, such as burning a candle far into the night, smoking tobacco, taking snuff, or chewing, wearing silk or gold as ornaments, and so forth. These "men of zeal" are armed with a long stick, which serves at once as a wand of office and an instrument of punishment. There is no trial nor any appeal against the "men of zeal," who seize upon the culprit and belabour him unmercifully—calling, if need be, for aid on the bystanders, who afford it with cheerful alacrity. Neither age nor rank protect the Nejdean.

The theology of the Wahábis was imported into India a little more than half a century ago by one Sayyid Ahmad, who began life as a horse-soldier in the service of a celebrated freebooter, Amir Khan Pindari, afterwards Nawab of Tonk. On the extermination of the Pindari power, Sayyid Ahmad recognised that he had commenced life in the wrong groove, and, giving up robbery, went, about 1816, to study the sacred law, under a doctor of high repute at Delhi. Going forth, at length, as a preacher, he attacked the abuses which have crept into the Mohammedan faith in India, and quickly obtained a zealous following. A prolonged halt at Patna so swelled the number of his followers as to require the formation of a regular system of government. He proceeded to levy taxes, and appointed four khalifs, or spiritual vicegerents. Having thus organised a species of theocracy, he made, in 1822, a pilgrimage to Mecca, and, while in Arabia, became impressed with the purity and sanctity of the Wahábi doctrines, especially those inculcating the Jihad or Crescentade against the Infidel. Far too wise to attempt, at once, an attack upon the English power, he—after preaching throughout Upper and Lower Bengal—made his appearance among the wild mountaineers of the Peshawur frontier, and then preached a Crescentade against the Sikhs, whom he accused of tyrannising over the Musalmans. The Pathan tribes responded to his appeal with frantic enthusiasm, and, on the 26th December, 1826, the Jihad against the infidel Sikhs commenced. A fanatical war ensued, prosecuted with relentless cruelty on both sides. General Avitubile, then commanding the forces of Runjeet Singh, checked the Mohammedan onslaught for a while, but, nevertheless, it seemed as if the Wahábi of India were about to emulate the successes of their Arabian predecessors, for, towards the end of 1830, the apostolic army took Peshawur. The prophet now proclaimed himself khalif, and struck coins bearing the legend "Ahmad the Just, Defender of the Faith; the glitter of whose scimitar scatters destruction among the infidels." But internal dissension soon defied all control on the part of the prophet. His army, like all the rebel gatherings which have succeeded it on the north-western border, was composed of two incongruous elements. His regular troops consisted of Hindustani fanatics, Mohammedans from the Indian provinces, notably Lower Bengal, who accepted his fortunes for good or for evil; but the Crescentading army was swollen by the Pathan mountaineers, who, although they had welcomed the prophet in the beginning, and were Musalmans to the backbone, yet regarded the Crescentade as mountaineers are apt to regard all warlike enterprises. Plunder was their principal object, and when this was satisfied their interest in the Crescentade cooled down. Finally, the prophet tried to reform the marriage customs of the highlanders, who sold their daughters in wedlock to the highest bidder, whereupon they arose and fell upon his lieutenants, and the prophet himself only escaped their clutches to be killed in action against the Sikhs, under Shere Singh.

The spirit of Sayyid Ahmad survived. Two of his lieutenants were the grandsons of a notorious murderer, who, flying for life beyond the Indus, established himself as a holy hermit at Sittana. The refugee ascetic was greatly venerated by the mountaineers, who presented him with the land on which his hermitage stood—as a sanctuary or inviolate asylum, a village of refuge from the avenger of blood. On this spot the fragments of the Crescentading army were gathered together under the hermit's grandson, who had served as treasurer to the prophet; while the religious head of the principality of Swat invited the other grandson to the Swat valleys and made him king. Thanks to this rebel camp beyond the Sikh—now our own frontier, and the propaganda of Patna, provided, as we have seen, with a regular apostolic succession of caliphs—the embers of the Crescentade have never died out, and have, at times, blazed up into those "little wars" which have cost us so much blood and treasure to quell. It would be absurd to consider the perpetual troubles with the "hill tribes" across the Indus as mere campaigns against brigands. The Pathans themselves could do little beyond buzzing around Peshawar; it is the Wahábi centres in our own provinces who provide them with the money and arms which enable them, and the reinforcements sent them from Bengal, to sting upon occasion. Until we annexed the Panjab, we troubled our heads very little about the Army of the Crescent. English gentlemen are not apt to care more for alien religions than Gallio, sometime pro-consul of Achaia, and nobody cared if, in the period between 1830 and 1846, the Mohammedan indigo bailiffs asked for a few months' leave, to take a turn at Crescentading as a religious duty. We have paid dearly for this remissness. Since the annexation of the Panjab the Indian Government has been compelled to undertake a score of campaigns against the Sittana host, who, accustomed to war, smote Sikh and Feringhi with equal fury. The campaign of 1863 cost eight hundred and forty-seven men, killed and wounded, or nearly one-tenth of the army, when it was eventually raised to nine thousand regular troops; yet, five years later, it was again found necessary to occupy the country with an army — compelled to operate over and among mountains ten thousand feet in height.

That the whole of this frontier trouble arises from the Wahábi organisation in the heart of our empire, admits of no possible doubt. Money is raised and transmitted, and recruits are made by telling young Musalmans that their soul is endangered by dwelling in the country of the Infidel; that India is the country of the Infidel; and that, if they wish for the paradise of Mohammed, their only path is out of India into some country of Islam. That these preachings are successful has been demonstrated by the bodies of dead Bengalis found, many a time and oft, in the cockpit before Peshawur; while the skill and secrecy with which supplies of men, arms, and money are forwarded to the frontier were abundantly proved at the Wahábi state trial at Umballa, in 1864, when persons of every rank in Mohammedan society were convicted of high treason. Among them were priests of the highest family, an army contractor and wholesale butcher, a scrivener, a soldier, an itinerant preacher, a house-steward, and a husbandman. "They had been defended by English counsel; they had had the full advantage both of technical pleas in bar and of able pleadings on the merits of the case; six of their countrymen had sat as assessors with the judge on the bench; and the trial ended in the condemnation of eight of them to transportation for life, and of the remaining three to the last penalty of the law. The conspiracy was only discovered through the devotion of the son of a Panjabi policeman, who, entering the fanatical camp as a spy, succeeded in bringing back the names of the men who had passed the Bengalis and their rifles up to the frontier.

Since the campaigns of 1863 and 1868, and the great trial at Umballa, the Wahábis have not made much noise in the world: but they, their propaganda, and their focus of rebellion in the north-west still exist, to the irritation and apprehension of Indian statesmen. Their complicity in the murders of Chief Justice Norman and Lord Mayo have, it is only fair to admit, never been brought clearly home to them; but confession from criminals of the fanatical stamp is not to be hoped for. At any rate, it is discomforting to know that among the discontented Musalman population of our Indian possessions exists a dangerous sect, preaching, in season and out of season, the necessity of flying from the country of the Infidel, and joining the Crescentade against their accursed masters; and it is productive of much anxiety in this country that the heir to the crown should have been advised to visit a province, where his life may hang upon the breath of the fanatical leader of a sect, having many points of resemblance with the ancient dynasty of Ashishin.

A JAGUAR STORY.

"Ah! Senor Inglez, I see you're determined to defy our climate! After the march that my husband led you through the woods this morning, one would have thought you'd have been glad of a siesta; and here I find you writing away like any abogado!" (lawyer).

So speaks, gliding out with the supple grace of Spanish blood into the verandah in which I am seated, my charming hostess, Senora Diaz, one of the most piquant little tropical beauties that Murillo ever dreamed of, though sadly marred by the custom (unhappily almost universal among the belles of Paraguay) of carrying in her smooth olive cheek a quid of tobacco that would astonish a man-o'-war's-man, and "chawing" it ever and anon with the relish of a Down-Easter over a "plug o' real Jeemes' River."

"Well, really, senora, after all the wonders I've seen in this fairyland of yours, I had need write them down as fast as I see them, lest, as your proverb says, one nail should drive out another!"

And in this there is certainly no exaggeration. Senor Diaz's ranch stands on a gentle slope, overlooking the broad smooth sweep of one of the countless tributaries of the Parana, on the opposite bank of which the wild grass surges up in one huge green wave to a height of ten or a dozen feet. The house itself is of the characteristic type common to all parts of Spanish America — the cool shady verandah, the long low front, the painted walls and cross-barred windows, the spacious patio or courtyard, the flat, parapeted azotea (roof) giving quite a fortress-like appearance to the whole building. For several acres around it, the cultivated ground, like a battalion of soldiers in the heart of a mob, displays its long even lines of feathery sugar-cane and huge banner-like bananas, in striking contrast to the dark impenetrable masses of untamed jungle that shut it in. A very paradise, in truth, were there not a snake under every leaf by day, and more mosquitoes than air to breathe at night.

"You flatter our poor country, senor, with the courtesy of your nation. But as I see that you are putting by your writing, I will task your gallantry so far as to beg your help in watering my flowers, for it is not easy for me, with my lame hand, to manage that great watering-pot!"

"Be pleased to use my hands as those of your slaves, senora, when and wherever you may need them. By-the-by, am I wrong in imagining that you promised me a story connected with the laming of the hand of which you speak? I would not willingly be troublesome, but when you have leisure——"

"With pleasure, senor; it is very kind of you to interest yourself in such a trifle. As soon as the plants are watered, I shall have the honour of serving you a cup of coffee on the balcony; and then, if you are good enough to care to hear it, the story is quite at your service."

And accordingly, ten minutes later, I find myself sitting in the verandah over a cup of such coffee as I have not tasted since leaving Arabia, with little Lolita (Dolores), my hostess's only daughter, and my especial pet nestling at my side; while the senora, deftly rolling up and lighting a paper cigarette, begins as follows:

"When we first came here, senor, a good many years ago, the place was very different from what you see it. My husband had got a grant of land from the Government, which was glad to give away ground about here to any one who would take the trouble to clear it; and well it might! For in those days the mato (jungle) reached right down to the water's edge; and such a black, horrid tangle it looked of briars, bamboos, Spanish bayonet, wild fig, liana, pirijao, locust-wood, and what not, that I felt as if I daren't even go a step into it for fear of being lost altogether. But my husband and his peons went manfully to work, chopping, felling, rooting, fencing, digging, all day long, except just in the worst heat; and many a time I've seen them come back so tired out, that they just dropped down to sleep where they were; and it was only when they woke up again, three or four hours later, that they had any thought of food.

"However, bit by bit, we began to get the ground into some sort of order; but even when we had cleared it, and begun to plant it, we had still plenty of enemies to fight against. The ants were the worst; for, apart from the havoc which they always make in a plantation, they have a way of running their galleries underground till they fairly undermine the whole surface, and it breaks in just like the crust of a pie. There's a place a little to the north of this (we'll show it you one of these days, when we go up the river in a boat) where you see a huge pit in the ground, full of bushes and wild grass, with here and there a few mouldering timbers, where a whole village sank at once, the foundations having been fairly honeycombed by the ants!* And thence comes our saying, that Paraguay has two enemies —'los Indios bravos y los Indios hormigas!' (the wild Indians and the ant Indians).

"However, luckily for us, there were no Indians about there, except the Indios mandos (tame Indians), who behaved well enough, and used to bring us food and dried meat in exchange for knives and aquardiente. And as for the ants, what with poisoning them, and digging up their nests, and flooding their galleries with boiling water, we managed to get the better of them at last, though even now they sometimes make a chacù (foray) upon us from the woods around. But after them came another pest that was far worse—the snakes. I need hardly tell you, who have been through the forests yourself, how they swarm there; and for a time I really gave myself up for lost. My husband used to call them 'the tax-gatherers,' and, really, they were quite as regular, not a day that we didn't find one or two of them somewhere about the house. And once—O, Santissima Madre!—what a fright I got. When Lolita was only a few months old, my husband and his men had gone out to their work one morning as usual, and I was busy in the house, with the child lying asleep on a mat at the other end of the room, when, all at once, I caught sight of a mouse's skin on the floor, with the body sucked clean out of it, like an orange. I knew at once that there must be a snake somewhere about, for they're mighty fond of mice, and that's just the way they deal with them; but, look as I might, I could see no snake anywhere, till suddenly the thought struck me, could it be under the child's mat? As gently as I could, I lifted up one corner, and there it was, the long, slimy, green-and-yellow beast, curled snugly up, and fast asleep. Ay de mi! what a start I got. I knew that I could do nothing with it myself, for it was a sort that you can only kill by shooting them; so I ran out into the courtyard, and, luckily, the first thing I saw was our hunter José, with his gun on his shoulder. I called him in at once, and he settled the beast with a charge of small shot.

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* A fact.

"However, as the work went on, and we got more and more ground cleared, our visitors began to forsake us; for snakes must have a thick cover to burrow in, and, when that's taken from them, they soon slink off. So then I began to hope that we were fairly at the end of our troubles; but we weren't—we were only at the beginning of them.

"I don't know how it was—perhaps it may have been that (as the proverb says) everything must have its turn—but somehow, all through our troubles with the ants and serpents, the bigger beasts had never disturbed us at all; but now, just as we were beginning to have a little peace from our other plagues, the four-footed gentlemen began to come on the stage at last. One morning, just as we were at breakfast, in came one of our vaqueros with news that our cattle, while feeding among the long grass on the other side of the river, had been attacked by a jaguar, and one of them killed. The fellow who brought the news had had to run for his life, and would hardly have escaped had there been anything on him fit to eat, or had there not been a fat ox ready to hand instead. As it was, he looked so thoroughly frightened (though he was a brave fellow enough), that it made us all rather serious. However, a week passed without any fresh alarm, and we were beginning to get over it, when suddenly in came three or four Indians in a great flurry to tell us that a huge jaguar had broken into their encampment, and killed a woman and one of their dogs. When my husband heard the story he made sure that it was the same beast that had fallen upon our cattle; for they described it as being of a very strange colour, far lighter than any that had ever been seen in those parts before, and from that they had nicknamed it 'The Pale Death.' So then we all thought it full time to do something; and my husband called his men together to go out and hunt it down.

"I remember that morning well, though it will be a year ago the day after to-morrow. Away they went merrily enough, every man with his gun and hunting-knife and Moro, the bloodhound, along with them. My husband turned and kissed his hand to me just as they entered the wood, and then they were gone!

"When I found myself all alone in the house with Lolita, and thought of what might happen if they met this horrible beast, I was so frightened that (although I had no thought of any chance of danger to myself), I wasn't satisfied till I had shut and barred every door in the house; and then I came and sat down in the drawing-room, and took Lolita in my lap, and tried to tell her a story.

"Suddenly I heard a scraping along the roof, and then a dull thump like the fall of something heavy! Anxious and nervous as I was, it gave me a terrible start, though I little dreamt what it really was. But the next moment came a sound just overhead that I could not mistake—a long hoarse roar, that I had heard many a time in the forest at night, and never heard without feeling my heart stand still. Then the thought struck me: 'Oh Heaven; the jaguar!'

"Dios de mi alma! I shall never forget that moment! For one minute I was quite sick and helpless, as if all the life had been struck out of me at one blow; and then a thought flashed upon me. There was no keeping the jaguar out, for most of the doorways were only hung with curtains; but in the store-room close by there was a huge wooden corn-chest, nearly empty, and big enough to hold six or seven people at once. If Lolita and I could only get in there, I thought, we might be saved yet!

"So I snatched up the child, ran with her into the store-room, and crouched down in the chest. Unluckily it closed with a spring lock, so that I had to keep the lid slightly open with my left hand, to avoid being shut down and stifled outright; but it had an overlapping edge several inches long, which quite covered my fingers.

"I was not a moment too soon. Hardly had I got fairly settled in my hiding-place, when I heard the great claws scraping the floor, and the hungry 'sniff' as the jaguar quested about in search of food. He came straight to the chest, and there stopped short a moment, as if suspecting a trap. Then he put his head close to the narrow opening, so that I could feel his hot breath on my face, snuffed once or twice to satisfy himself, and then tried to force the lid up with his paw!

"Ay de mi! how I trembled! but, thank God, the great paw would not go into that little chink. All he could do was to get his tongue in and lick my fingers, making them bleed as if they had been rasped with a saw. And then, what with the taste of blood, and what with hearing Lolita crying inside (for she, poor darling, was as much frightened as I was), his fury was roused, and he began to roar, not an honest, deep-mouthed lion roar, but a sharp, snarling yell, that made my very blood run cold. Ugh! I can't think how I didn't die outright, but the touch of Lolita's little arm, clinging round my neck, seemed to give me courage.

"But the worst was still to come. Finding that he could not reach me from below, he sprang on the top of the chest, crushing my hand between the lid and the upper edge. Then I thought all was over, and gave a scream that made the whole house ring.

"My scream was answered by a sound that made my heart leap—the distant cry of a bloodhound! The jaguar heard it, too, for he leaped down and stood listening a moment, and then ran to the door, as if to escape. There it was again—much nearer—and with it the voices of men calling to each other. They were coming back! Meanwhile, the jaguar seemed to get bewildered, and ran wildly up and down the inner gallery. Suddenly there came a loud shout at one of the windows, and then two shots and a frightful yell; and then my husband's voice, strained to its loudest: 'Cachita! where are you?' I just managed to crawl to the door and let him in, and then I fainted outright.

"They told me afterwards that our bloodhound had struck the trail of the jaguar leading straight toward the house; and then they all set off to run like madmen, fearing some harm to me. My husband and José distanced the rest, and came up just in time to shoot the beast through the window; but he told me afterwards, that when he saw it rushing about inside, he felt like one under the collar of the garotte (the instrument of execution).

"As for my hand, it was so crushed that I couldn't stir a joint of it for weeks after. The Indians doctored it for me, and they tell me I shall have the use of it again by-and-by; but I don't need that to remind me of that day. If I live a thousand years, I shall never forget it!"

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LVI.

It was past mid-day when a loud peal at the bell of Ivy Lodge startled the women in the kitchen. Polly ran to the front door to open it. There stood her master, who pushed quickly into the house past her. "Is your mistress come back?" he asked almost breathlessly.

"No, sir! Oh, mercy me, what's the matter? What has happened?" she cried, for his face showed undisguised terror and agitation. He sat down in the dining-room and asked for a glass of wine. Having drunk it at a gulp, he said, "I cannot understand it. I have been nearly to Whitford along the meadow-path; I didn't try the other way, but then she would not have wandered towards Duckwell, surely! Then I crossed the fields and came back by the road, looking everywhere, and asking every one I met. Nothing to be seen of her.

Your mistress's manner has been so strange of late. You must have noticed it. I—I—am afraid—I cannot help being afraid that some terrible thing has happened to her. I have had a dreadful weight and presentiment on my mind all the morning. Where can she be?"

"Oh no, no, sir. Never fear! She'll be all safe somewheres or other. She'll just have gone wandering on into the town. She have been strange in her ways, poor thing! and we couldn't but see it, sir. But she can't have come to no harm. There's nothing to hurt her hereabout."

Thus honest Polly, consolingly. But she was infected, too, by the terror in her master's white face.

"You don't know," said he tremulously, "what reason I have for uneasiness." He drew out from his pocket-book a torn scrap of paper with some writing on it. "I found this on the floor by her desk this morning. This is what alarmed me so before I went out, but I wouldn't say anything about it then."

Polly stared at the paper with eager curiosity, but the sharp, slanting writing puzzled her eyes, never quite at their ease with the alphabet in any shape. "Is it missus's writing?" she asked.

"Yes; see, she talks of being so wretched. Why, God knows! Her mind has been quite unhinged. That is the only explanation. And, you see, she says, 'It will not be long before this misery is at an end. I cannot live on as I am living. I will not.'"

"Lord ha' mercy upon us!" ejaculated the woman, on whom the full force of her master's anxiety and alarm suddenly broke. Her round ruddy cheeks grew almost as white as his, and Lydia, who had been peeping and listening at the door, burst out crying, and began uttering a series of incoherent phrases.

"Hold your noise!" said Polly roughly. "There's troubles enough without you. Now look ye here, sir. I'll put on my bonnet and go right down into Whitford. You take a look along Whit-meadow up Duckwell way. I bet ten pound she's there somewheres about. She has taken to going about through the fields, hasn't she, Lydia? Oh, hold your noise, and try and do something to help, you whimpering fool!"

Polly's violent excitement and trepidation took a practical form, whilst the other woman was utterly helpless. She was bidden to stay at home and "receive missus," and tell her that master was come back, and beg her "to bide still in the house until he should return."

"But I'm afraid she'll never come back!" sobbed Lydia. "I'm so frightened to stop here by myself."

"Ugh, you great silly! Haven't got no feeling for the poor husband? He looks scared well-nigh to death, poor lad. And as for you, it ain't much you care what's become of missus. You never had a good word for her. You're only crying because you're a coward."

Meanwhile Algernon sat in the little dining-room, with a strange sensation, as if every muscle in his body had been turned into lead. He must get up, and go out as the woman had said. He must! But there he sat with that sensation of marvellous weight holding him down in his chair. The house was absolutely still. Lydia, unable to remain alone in the kitchen, had gone to stand at the front door and stare up and down the road. Thus she heard nothing of footsteps approaching the house at the back, coming hurriedly through the garden, and pausing at the threshold of the door, which was open.

Presently, after some muttered conversation, in which two or three voices took part, a man entered the house and came along the passage, looking, as he went, into the kitchen and finding no one. Just as he reached the door of the dining-room, Algernon came out and confronted him.

"There's been an accident, sir, I'm sorry to say," said the man. "The alarm was given up our way about an hour and a half ago. Somebody's fallen into the Whit. I'm very sorry, sir, but I'm afraid you must prepare for bad news."

While he was still speaking, the house had filled with an ever-gathering crowd. People stood in the passage, peeping over each other's shoulders, and pushing to get a glimpse of Algernon. There were even faces pressed to the windows outside, and the garden was blocked up. Polly had come hurrying back from the town, and now elbowed her way through the crowd to her master. She soon cleared the passage of the throng of idlers who blocked it up, and shut them outside the door by main force. They still swarmed about the house and garden, both on the side of the road and that of Whit-meadow. And their numbers increased every minute. Polly pulled the man who had been spokesman into the dining-room, and bade him say what he had to say without further preamble. "It's no use 'preparing' him," she said, pointing to Algernon, who had sunk into a chair, and was holding his forehead with his hands; "you'll only make it worse. I'm afraid you can't tell him anything dreadfuller than he's got into his head already. Speak out!"

Thus requested, the man, a carpenter of Pudcombe village, told his tale. Some men, working in the fields about a mile above Whitford—half a mile, perhaps, from Ivy Lodge, had heard cries for help from the meadows near the river. He, the carpenter, happened to be passing along a field-path from a farmhouse where he had been at work, and ran with the labourers down to the water's edge. There they saw David Powell, the Methodist preacher, wildly shouting for help, and with clothes dripping wet. He had waded waist-deep into the Whit to try to save some one who was drowning there, but in vain. He could not swim, and the current had carried the drowning person out of his reach. "You know," said the carpenter, "there are some ugly swirls and currents in the Whit, for all it looks so sluggish." A boat had been got out and manned, and had made all speed in the direction Powell pointed out. He insisted on accompanying them in his wet clothes. They searched the river for some time in vain. They had got as far as Duckwell Reach when they caught sight of a dark object close in shore. It was the form of a woman. Her clothes had caught in the broken stump of an old willow that grew half in the water; and she was thus held there, swinging to and fro with the current. She was taken out and carried to Duckwell Farm, where every effort had been made to restore her to consciousness. Powell understood the best methods to employ. The Seth Maxfields had done everything in their power, but it was no use. She had never moved, nor breathed, nor quivered an eyelash.

That was the substance of the carpenter's story.

"Is she dead?" asked Algernon with his face hidden. They were the first words he had spoken And when the man answered with a mournful but positive "Yes; quite, quite dead," he said not a syllable further, but turned away from them, and buried his head in the cushions of the chair.

"He hasn't even asked who the woman was!" whispered the carpenter to Polly. The tears were streaming down the woman's cheeks. Castalia had not made herself beloved in her own house, but Polly had felt the sort of regard for her which grows by acts of kindness, and forbearance and compassion, performed. She shook her head, and answered in an equally low tone, "No need for him to ask, poor young fellow. We've all been fearing something dreadful about missus all morning. And he had his reasons for being afraid, as she had gone and done something desperate."

"What—you don't mean that she made away with herself?" said the carpenter, raising his hands.

"Oh, that's more than you and I know. Best say nothing. How can we judge? Poor soul! Well, I always did feel sorry for her, and that I'll say. Though, mind you, I'm sorry for him too. But there's some folks as can't stroke the dog without kicking the cat."

The news spread rapidly through Whitford, and caused the utmost excitement there. Mrs. Algernon Errington had been found drowned in the Whit. How—whether by accident or design—no one knew. But that did not prevent people from hazarding a thousand conjectures. She had wandered out alone, had ventured too near the edge of the slippery bank, and had lost her footing. She had been robbed and thrown into the river. She had committed suicide from ungovernable jealousy. She had committed suicide in a fit of insanity. She had become a hypochondriac. She had gone raving mad. She had committed various frauds at the post-office, and had killed herself in terror at the prospect of their coming to light. This latter hypothesis found much credence. So many circumstances—trifling, perhaps, in themselves, but important when massed together—seemed to corroborate it. And then, if that did not seem an adequate motive for the desperate deed, Castalia's notorious and passionate jealousy was thrown in as a make-weight. There would be a coroner's inquest, of course. And the chief witness at it would probably be David Powell. It appeared he was the last person who had seen the unfortunate woman alive.

Mrs. Thimbleby was in terrible affliction. Mr. Powell was very ill. He had plunged into the ice-cold river, and had then remained for hours in his wet clothes. He had not been able to walk back from Duckwell Farm, and Farmer Maxfield had brought him home himself in his spring-cart, and had bidden widow Thimbleby look after him a little, for he (Maxfield) thought the preacher in a very bad way. He was seized with violent fits of shivering, and the doctor whom Mrs. Thimbleby sent for to see him, on her own responsibility, told them to get him into bed at once, to keep him warm, and to administer certain remedies which he ordered. But no word would Powell speak about his ailments to the doctor, or to anyone else. He waved off all questions with a determined though gentle resolution. He allowed himself to be helped into bed, being absolutely unable to stand or walk without assistance. And he did not refuse the warm clothing which the widow heaped upon him. He lay still and passive, but he would say no word of his symptoms and sensations to the doctor. "The man can in no wise help me," he said to Mrs. Thimbleby. "All the wisdom of this world is foolishness to one whom the Lord has laid his hands on. I am bowed as a reed; yea, I am broken."

His voice was hoarse and feeble, and his eyes blazed with a feverish light. The widow found it vain to importune him to swallow the medicines that had been sent. In her heart she had some misgivings that it might be wrong to interfere in the dealings of Providence with so holy a man, by administering drugs to him. But the misgivings never reached a point of conviction that might have comforted her.

"I'll leave you quiet awhile, Mr. Powell," she said. "Maybe you'll sleep, and that would do you more good than anything. Sleep is God's own cure for a many troubles, isn't it?"

He looked at her with a wild unrecognising stare. "When I say my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions," he murmured.

The good woman softly went away, wiping the tears from her eyes. "One thing is a mercy," said the poor soul to herself, "and that is, that Mr. Diamond is so kind and thoughtful. He gives no trouble, and is a help on the contrary. And I'm sure I don't know how we should have managed without his arm to help Mr. Powell upstairs. And another thing is a mercy—I hope it isn't wrong to feel it so!—that Mrs. Errington is out of the house. I do not know how I should have been strengthened to keep up and attend upon her, and she in such a way, poor thing! The Lord has had pity on us for Mr. Powell's sake."

Minnie Bodkin had driven to Mrs. Thimbleby's house early in the afternoon, and taken Mrs. Errington away with her. Mrs. Errington had rushed to Ivy Lodge under the first shock of the terrible news which Mr. Smith, the surgeon, communicated to her. She had seen her son for a few minutes. Her intention had been to remain with him, but this he would not allow. He had insisted on his mother's returning to her own lodgings after a very brief interview with him.

"No wonder he can't bear to have her about, though she is his mother. Tiresome old thing!" exclaimed Lydia, peevishly.

But if Algernon got rid of his mother as quickly as possible, he refused to admit any one else at all, and remained shut up in the dining-room, whither he had had a sofa carried, meaning to sleep there. He had been obliged to receive Seth Maxfield, who came to ask when and how he would wish his wife's body conveyed from Duckwell Farm to Whitford. "Can't she stay there?" he had asked in a dazed sort of manner. Then added quickly, turning away his head, "I'll leave it all to you. You've been very good. You've done everything for the best, I am sure." And he put out his hand to the farmer with his face still turned away. And later on he had had to see some officials about the inquest. But after that was over, he locked his door, and refused to open it except to Polly, when she brought him food. He ate almost ravenously, drank a great deal of wine, and then lay down and dozed away the hours until dawn next day.

CHAPTER LVII.

The inquest was to be held at the "Blue Bell" inn. And after the inquest, the dust of the Honourable Castalia Errington was to be laid beneath the turf of the humble village churchyard, amidst less noble dust, with the daisies growing impartially above all, and speading their pink-edged petals over the just and the unjust alike.

It was now currently reported that the thefts at the post-office had been Castalia's doing. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Dockett had been "sure of it all along"—so they said, and so they really imagined now. The story of the mysterious notes paid to Ravell, the draper, was in every mouth. Roger Heath went about saying that Mr. Errington ought to make his loss good out of his own pocket, if he had any feelings of honour. But all the people who had not lost any money in the post-office were disgusted at Roger Heath's hardness and avarice, and ask indignantly if that was the moment to speak of such things? For the tragedy of Castalia's death had produced a strong effect in Whitford. Perhaps there was not one human being in the town who grieved that she was gone; but many were oppressed by the manner of her going. People had an uneasy feeling in remembering how much they had disliked her; almost as if their dislike made them guilty of her death in some vague, far-off, inexplicable way. They told themselves and each other that though "her manners had been repellent, poor thing," yet for their part they had always felt sorry for her, and had long perceived that her mind was astray, and that she was falling into a low melancholy state, that was likely to lead to some terrible catastrophe. By this time scarcely any one in Whitford entertained a doubt as to Castalia's having destroyed herself. And the social verdict, "Temporary insanity," was pronounced in assured anticipation that the legal verdict would be to that effect also.

There were two men who did not mystify themselves by conjuring up any factitious tenderness about Castalia's memory, and who gave way to no superstitious uneasiness of conscience as to their dislike of her when she was alive. One of these men was Jonathan Maxfield, the other was the dead woman's husband.

Maxfield had no retrospective softness on the subject. He, indeed, being accustomed to take certain passages of the Old Testament very seriously and literally, and having fed his mind almost exclusively upon those passages, was of opinion that Castalia's tragic fate had been brought about by a direct interposition of Providence as a judgment on her for her bad behaviour to himself and his daughter. And if this opinion on Maxfield's part should appear incredibly monstrous, let it be remembered that in his own mind "the godly" were typified by the Maxfield family, and "the ungodly" by the enemies of that family.

As to Algernon—harassed, anxious, and doubtful of the future as he might be, he was glad that his wife was dead. Her death made a way out—apparently the only possible way out—of a labyrinth of troubles, and relieved Algernon from the apprehension of an exposure which it made him sick to think of. He had not meant to kill her, he said to himself. He had certainly laid no deliberate plan to do so. Had he, in truth, been the cause of her death? In the state of mind she was in, would she not have thrown herself into the river, or otherwise put an end to herself, without that touch from him which he had given, he knew not how?

It all seemed unreal to him when he thought of it—the leaden water, the grey sky and meadows, and the slippery bank with its tufts of blackberry bushes. He went over and over again in his mind the words that had passed between himself and Castalia; her violence, and her wild jealousy and suspicions, and her allusion to her uncle's letter, and to what Gibbs had told her, and then her fierce threat that she would not spare him! She had become utterly unmanageable—mad, in fact. She had resolved to die. She had a suicidal mania. That scrap of writing would suffice to prove it. To be sure he had found it and put it in his pocket-book weeks ago, although he told the servant that he had picked it up off the floor that morning of his return from London. But that only indicated that the idea had long been rooted in her mind. And besides, the paper bore no date. There was nothing to show how long it had been written.

No, it was not he who had killed Castalia. She had gone down willingly to death. She had uttered no sound, no cry. He should have heard a cry all across the silent meadows. He had not looked back. He had fled away from the river at his topmost speed after he saw her slip, and stagger, and fall heavily into the black water under the shadow of the bank. Had she risen again to the surface? It was said that drowning persons always rose three times. But she had made no sound. Surely she would have cried out if she had longed for life. Ugh! It was horrible to imagine her white face and staring eyes rising above the strong dragging current and looking for help. That was all very ghastly, very hideous. He would not think of it. It was over. Castalia was dead. And although he would have given much that she should have died in any other way, yet he was glad that she was dead, and he knew that he was glad.

He made no pretence to himself of a factitious tenderness about her. She had been thoroughly antagonistic and distasteful to him of late. She had been the bitter drop flavouring every action, every hope, every minute of his life. He had been the victim of a hard fate, and of the false promises (implied, if not expressed) of Lord Seely. Those paltry sums—those notes, that he had taken—he had been driven into committing that action altogether by stress of circumstances. It was strange to himself to think of the light that action would appear in to other people. To his own mind, knowing how it had come to pass in an instant, by the tug of a sudden impulse, it seemed so clear that there was no real ground for blaming him in the matter! He had felt the difficulty of getting money with a severity which the rest of the world probably could not conceive. He was absolutely indifferent to the question of abstract right or wrong, justice or injustice, in the case. But the concrete hardship to himself of being poor he had keenly felt to be undeserved.

And now, if it were not for one thing, he should begin to breathe more freely. The one thing that weighed on him with a gloomy, though formless foreboding, was the inquest. He had been obliged to go to Duckwell Farm. He had been asked to look at Castalia's dead body. He had not dared to refuse to do so; but he had requested to be shown into the room where she lay, alone and without witnesses. The room was that sunny parlour where Rhoda Maxfield had sat on many a summer evening, and where the neighbours had discussed the news of his own marriage less than a year ago. But Algernon's imagination did not wander very far from the present. He walked to the window and looked out through the black trellis-work of leafless vine branches. Then he stared at the prints on the walls, and the gay china vases filled with winter nosegays of trembling grass and chrysanthemums. And then his eyes, which had wandered in every other direction, were compelled to turn towards the broad, old-fashioned sofa covered with fair white linen, under which the outlines of a human shape revealed themselves.

Was that stiff, white, silent thing Castalia? He could not realise it. He would scarcely have started if the door had opened and his wife had walked into the room in her ordinary dress, and with her ordinary gait. He had seen her last full of passionate excitement. That stiff, white, silent thing could not be she. He would not lift the cover, though, nor look on that which lay beneath. But he stood and gazed at it until the heap beneath the linen sheet seemed to stir and change its outlines. Then he turned away shuddering to the window, and looked at his watch to see whether he might venture to leave the room yet. Would the people think he had been there too short a time? He came out at length, looking pale and depressed enough to excite a good deal of sympathy in the breast of Mrs. Seth Maxfield. And with his usual quick susceptibility to the impression he produced on others, he was fully aware of this, gratified by it, despite the chill vision of the still white heap under the coverlet which persistently haunted his memory. He saw looks of pity; he heard whispered exclamations of admiration, and they did more than gratify, they reassured him. It had entered into nobody's mind to conceive that he had been the cause of his wife's death. Into whose head, indeed, should it enter? or how? He remembered the last lightning-quick glance he had cast over the wide meadows, and how it had shown them to him empty and bare of any living thing for as far as his eye could reach. No; he was safe from suspicion. Of course he was safe from suspicion! And yet—he would have given a year of his life to have the inquest over, and the dead woman safely put away beneath the daisies in Duckwell churchyard.

Meanwhile the mortal frame that had so throbbed and suffered for his sake, lay there lonely and neglected. Strangers' hands had composed it decently; a stranger's roof sheltered it. It was to lie in a stranger's grave. Only one woman came and stood beside the couch in the sunny parlour, and looked on the dead shape with eyes full of compassionate tears; and, before going away, laid some sprays of fern and delicate hothouse blossoms on the quiet breast, and fastened there a curl of light hair. The hair had been cut jestingly from Algernon Errington's head when he was a schoolboy, and then put away and forgotten for years. It now lay above his dead wife's heart. "She was so fond of him, poor soul!" said the compassionate woman. It was Minnie Bodkin.

THE HAND AND MASTER-FINGER.—The writer of this paper (vol. 15, p. 129) begs to apologise for a misstatement therein. Misled by reading a description, published some months ago, of a cross in course of erection in Donnington Park, "on the spot where the late Countess of Loudon's hand was buried," he said that the lady's extraordinary directions, respecting the cutting off and disposal of her right hand, had been carried out to the letter. Such, he is happy to say now, was not the case; a near relative of Lady Loudon kindly writing in correction: "It is true she wished it done; but I am thankful to say, as the will was not opened till after the funeral, it was not done; but the cross has been, I believe, erected in Donnington Park on the spot named."

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK II. CHAPTER III. AUDREY'S NARRATIVE. LADY OLIVE.

"MY first grown-up dancing-party was followed, within a few days, by my first grown-up dinner-party. The scene of that distinguished event was a very different one from the Lipscotts' house in the best street in the town of Wrottesley; and there was no privilege, among those which I enjoyed, that I prized more highly, than the entrée at Despard Court. That privilege had long been mine, ever since the time when old Mrs. Despard, the aunt of the present occupant, had been moved to pity for the motherless little girl at the Dingle House, and had sent for me to come up and 'play' at the Court, in the dreary days which I could not now remember, after my mother's death, and when the noise and liveliness of a child, full of health and spirits, were more than my father could bear. There were no children at Despard Court; but there were various things which delighted a child, and the old lady was very kind to me. There were the long corridors and the big rooms, whose rich hangings and tall looking-glasses afforded me my first glimpses of splendour; the cabinets full of pretty things, which Mrs. Despard would patiently explain to me; the delightful picture-books in the library; and, above all, there were the stables, the poultry-yard, and the dogs.

"Mrs. Despard and my father met rarely, though they were friends, fast and firm. After my mother's death, my father dropped out of the way of going to the Court. I suppose he shrank from it, at first, because she had been there with him so constantly; but he appreciated Mrs. Despard's kindness to me, and they exchanged grave, kindly notes frequently—documents which had reference to my well-being chiefly. Mrs. Despard's notes to my father are in my possession now, neatly tied up and docketed in his own hand: 'From my old friend Mrs. Despard, chiefly concerning Audrey.' Then there is added a note, which had a sad significance for him, and recorded a severe loss to me — that of Mrs. Despard's death. After that event I went no more to Despard Court. The house was shut up for nearly three years. The new proprietor, Mrs. Despard's nephew, was in India with his regiment, and in silence and gloom stood the beautiful old house. Colonel Despard sent home orders that the valuable library, which had been a great resource to my father, was still to be at his disposition, and expressed a polite hope in writing that Mr. Dwarris would make any use he chose of the park and gardens. The horses were sold; the poultry-yard was maintained in a much shrunken state for the benefit of the gardener and his wife, who remained in sole charge of the place; the dogs were distributed among the neighbours, my father taking Mrs. Despard's two personal pets, Moses and Aaron, into his own establishment; and all the kindly and hospitable life of Despard Court came to a long pause.

"When at length it became known in and about Wrottesley that Colonel Despard was coming home, there was, not unnaturally, a good deal of excitement about the circumstance. To the townspeople it could hardly be said to matter much; but to the 'county,' one more pleasant and hospitable proprietor, with all the prestige of a military career, was an attractive prospect. An unmarried proprietor, too, and still a comparatively young man! The combination was one which would need the pen of Miss Austen to do justice to it, and to the hopes and expectations to which, I have no doubt, it gave rise, but concerning which I have no personal knowledge. I was still too much of a child to take in the social aspects of events; and even if I had been older—if I had fully entered on my era of illusion about 'the officers'—I don't think I should have had any romantic ideas concerning a colonel. Lieutenants and captains were the model creatures of my fancy; they were 'the young, the slim, the low-voiced.' I drew the line at majors. There was Major Craddock, for instance—he never interested me; he was short, fat, red-haired, and red-faced, and he had quite a name in Wrottesley for being niggardly with his money. Colonel Despard came; but he remained only a short time at Despard Court, and people saw very little of him. He called on my father, but I did not see him; and though I was curious enough about the colonel, when he actually appeared upon the limited scene of our lives, my father was not a person to be questioned freely. He took Griffith with him, when he went to Despard Court to return the visit; and, when I got an opportunity, I indemnified myself for the restraint I had put upon my curiosity by asking my brother innumerable questions. Griffith was vague, however, after the tiresome fashion of boys. Colonel Despard was handsome, be said—but he did not know whether he had brown eyes or blue—and he had left the army and was going to Ireland, to see his relatives there; but he meant to live at Despard Court, and he and father had talked a great deal about farming and hunting. When I said I had no idea that father knew anything about either, Griffith snubbed me, and I rather hated Colonel Despard after that.

"He went to Ireland, and the next thing I remember is, that there was a great stir at the Court. Workmen were set to work on it; upholsterers' people were busy about it; furniture arrived from London; rumours of the engaging of numerous servants, and the purchasing of several horses were set afloat; and then came the greatest piece of news of all. Colonel Despard was married! Married in Ireland, married in Dublin, to an Irish lady, his own cousin, and an earl's daughter. Long afterwards Miss Minnie Kellett told me, in her sentimental way, how much people talked about 'the gallant soldier and his noble bride,' and how it was taken very ill indeed by the 'county' that Colonel Despard did not bring the noble bride to his own home at once, but kept lingering on in Ireland just for the sake of the hunting, to which sport, it appeared, he and his wife were both addicted, and preferred it of the Irish kind.

"A few weeks later, another piece of news reached Wrottesley. The gallant soldier was never to bring the noble bride to Despard Court; the owner of the old place was never to be known to the 'county.' Within two months of her marriage-day the bride was a widow. Colonel Despard was killed by a fall in the hunting-field, before his wife's eyes, and close beside her, and she, having fallen fainting from her saddle at the sight, had been saved with much difficulty from desperate injury by the struggling animal which had come down upon his rider. The tragic occurrence made a profound sensation at Wrottesley, where it was supposed in certain quarters to be a 'judgment' upon Colonel Despard; though it never appeared very distinctly that he had done anything to merit one. But a general impression did undoubtedly prevail that he had 'brought it on himself' through marrying an Irishwoman and remaining in 'her country.' After a while it became known that Colonel Despard had left all his property to his wife, and the next rumour was that the widow was coming to take up her residence at Despard Court. She came; and for some days that was all that was known about her. Then there came a letter for my father, in which, in a few simple words, the lady of Despard Court told him that her late husband had spoken of him with respect and regard as an old friend of the Despard family, and that she ventured, on the plea of that friendship, to ask him to call upon her. My father obeyed the summons immediately, and I have a distinct remembrance of the words in which he answered me when I asked him what sort of person the young widow was—her terrible calamity invested her with an almost awful interest to my mind;—they were these:

"'She is the most sensible woman I ever spoke to in my life.'

"'Is she very handsome?'

"'Not at all. Not even good-looking, I should say. But that is a matter of taste, my dear, and you will soon have an opportunity of forming your own opinion, for she's coming to tea to-morrow.'

"Thus it happened that the first house at Wrottesley which the Lady Olive Despard entered was ours, and the first friendship she formed among the strangers who surrounded her, was with my father.

"I can draw a picture of her, in my mind, as she sat in a low chair beside the window of our little drawing-room, in the spring twilight, and talked to my father, while I was making tea awkwardly and shyly enough at the table—talked in a low but perfectly clear voice, very sweet toned, and with just the least touch of an Irish accent in it. She was dressed in the weeds of a widow, when that costume had not been transformed into something as unlike a symbol of mourning as any dress composed of black and white materials can be. Her gown, of the plainest make, was entirely covered with crape, and cambric bands were folded back upon the tight-fitting sleeves. A widow's cap, which covered the whole head and concealed all the hair, except about an inch over the forehead, where a smooth bandeau of dark brown showed, was tied under her chin with wide strings of white muslin, and the wedding-ring upon her left hand was the only object which broke the severe uniformity of her dress. How bright, and new, and lasting that deceitful wedding-ring looked! The little circlet had a fascination for me; I could not help looking at it, thinking of the day it had been put on, of the hand that had placed it on her finger; and wondering how it was possible that any woman who had seen what she had seen, could be so quiet and self-possessed—could, indeed, have outlived it at all.

"I could not gainsay my father's opinion about the Lady Olive's looks. It seemed rather hard, and decidedly contrary to all precedent, that a young widow, with so tragic a story attaching to her widowhood, and who was also an earl's daughter, should not be handsome. You may be sure I had the melodious nonsense of 'Lady Geraldine' at my fingers' ends, and looked out for level-fronting eyelids and a floating, dove-like hand, and all the rest of it, in the person of one born to tread the crimson carpet, and to breathe the perfumed air, with such good will and strong sense of the fitness of things, that it is rather surprising to me now that I didn't find them. They were not there, as a matter of fact; and what was there was just a small, slight, lady-like woman, who looked older than I knew Lady Olive Despard to be (Miss Minnie and I had consulted the Peerage, and, indeed, that volume would have opened of itself at the page devoted to the records of the earldom of Linban), and who had nothing remarkable about her face except its expression.

"Lady Olive's complexion was fair and clear, but not bright; her eyes were light gray, well shaped, but not remarkable for their size; her features were insignificant, except the mouth, which was delicately formed and refined, but not weak. When the habitual expression of her face gave way to one which was only casual, that face was one which might be seen a dozen times, and not recognised the thirteenth. Its habitual expression was that of waiting—I can find no other word to express it—the look of one who expects to hear something, or to see someone; has expected either for a long time, and is prepared for either when it shall come. I suppose I did not read this in her face when I first saw it—no doubt, I am now giving the result of later and more experienced observation—but I did not discern that curious expression without defining it the very first time I saw her; and, in my sharp, half-shrewd, half-imaginative girl's way, I made another observation about Lady Olive Despard. She was very serious, and a subdued sorrow was in her voice and manner; but she was not the utterly broken-hearted being whom Miss Minnie Kellett and I had pictured to ourselves.

"The age of the Keepsake, and Friendship's Offering, and the Forget Me Not, still lingered, at least in country places, when I was a girl; and the ladies whose portraits illustrated the moving narratives of those noble works were ideally beautiful in my eyes, and those of Miss Minnie. How graceful and pensive, how refined and charming they were, with their big eyes, and their flowing ringlets, their aerial white robes, with no suggestion of the milliner and the laundress about them, 'with all the gown in one piece, and the scarfs waving by some preternatural agency, and their slim, useless, impossible hands.' When we had speculated upon the probabilities of the personal appearance and manners of a 'Lady Olive,' one of these delightful images had presented itself to our fancy; and I distinctly remember a certain Rosina, in a Keepsake, who leaned over an Italian balcony in an impossible attitude, simpering sweetly at nothing, with a falcon on her arm, in whom we discerned the ideal of a Lady Olive. Very different, indeed, was the reality, and at first it was rather a shock to us. But Lady Olive Despard was one of those persons who grow on the liking of their acquaintances, turning them with no difficulty, if such be their pleasure, into friends. It was not long until I had 'got over' the facts that Lady Olive Despard did not in the least resemble Rosina or any other Book of Beauty ideal, that her hair was not golden or raven (black won when I was a girl), that roses and lilies did not blend in her complexion, and that her eyes were not at all starry. It was a little more difficult to get over the departure of Lady Olive from my ideal standard in another direction. Like many other careless young persons, I often dared to let my fancy deal with the awful griefs and calamities of human life, arranging them into categories of the more or less interesting. Among the former I pleased myself with the idea of early widowhood. There was something beautiful in it, I thought, in its abandonment to despair, in its absorbing desolation, in its rich romance of sentiment, memory, and association. The costume, the demeanour, the modes of speech, the daily surroundings of a lovely young widow, sheltered by the respect and admiration of everybody, with the dignity of marriage and the touching atmosphere of bereavement about her—all these had a fascination for my fancy of which I shudder to think now, when the terrible realities of life have been revealed to me. The idea of Lady Olive Despard appealed strongly to these absurd notions of mine, and before she came to Despard Court I had even gone the length of scribbling a number of very gushing and doleful verses, in which I pictured the broken lily, and the shattered column, the crushed violet, and the uprooted oak; in short, all the commonplace images which poetasters have heaped up ready to the hand of silly rhymesters, and made them subserve the purposes of my fanciful vision of Lady Olive's widowhood. Colonel Despard I depicted, of course, in the most glowing terms. He was the bravest of soldiers, the handsomest of men, the most gallant of cavaliers, and the noble courser which laid him low was invoked as the instrument of a blind destiny, jealous of the great and brave. How ashamed of all this rubbish I felt, when, long afterwards, some one came upon it in turning out some old papers of mine, and, insisting on reading it aloud, while I was held at arm's length, dancing with rage and impatience, ridiculed with impartial mercilessness my metre and my meaning!

"The Lady Olive Despard of my reveries and my rhymes appeared upon the scene of our quiet life at the Dingle House, and dissipated my fondest and most cherished ideas. Not only did she not look in the least like a Lady Olive of the Keepsake order, but she did not fulfil her rôle of young widowhood to my satisfaction. To be sure she dressed the part quite accurately. Her weeds were of the orthodox depth and of the customary materials, and she probably looked no more, and no less, pretty, or not pretty, in them than in any other attire. But her demeanour scattered all my fondest notions to the wind. It was not interesting, it was not romantic. Positively, if Lady Olive's head-dress had not been a widow's cap; if Lady Olive's skirts had not been of black crape a yard deep, one might have fancied she was wearing mourning for an uncle, or even a cousin. Nothing could exceed the decorum of her conduct in every way; but then, on the other hand, nothing could exceed its calm. And she was always ready to be occupied and interested about everything, and in every one; I never saw any signs of reverie or abandonment to painful thought about her. She spoke quite freely and naturally of Colonel Despard, but not with the terrible effort and agonising attempt at calmness, which the naming of a beloved name, no longer spoken among the living, demands from the wretched survivors of the light of their lives, and the joy of their homes; and she alluded even cheerfully to the plans and projects they had formed in concert, for the setting up of their establishment at Despard Court, and for the life in common there which was never to be begun. All this was quite against my theories, and, as it is not in the human nature of early girlhood to acknowledge that its theories are most probably entirely wrong and unfounded, my fancy, confounded on one side, set off actively on another, to seek an equally imaginary explanation of so wide a departure from the 'interesting young widow' standard, on the part of a person who, however disappointing in some respects, impressed an immediate sense of her superiority upon even my silly brain.

"What if Colonel Despard had not been the one love of Lady Olive's life at all? What if the first impulses of her young heart had been stifled and repressed, and the spring of mourning within her was a blighted love, instead of an interesting early widowhood? Then, in that case, her demeanour would be comprehensible, and my sensibilities would find another channel for their expansion, in which they would but flow more broadly and freely! Any one, with even a moderate comprehension of the nature of girls, will be at no loss to understand my frame of mind, and the curiosity with which the highborn lady of Despard Court inspired me.

"Miss Minnie Kellett was never tired of expatiating upon my luck, in finding favour from the first with Lady Olive Despard. The case of the Dingle House was exceptional, for some time at least, during which Lady Olive went nowhere. The 'county' called upon her, of course, and she returned the county's visits, but there the matter ended. She received no company at Despard Court, and she never left its precincts to go into any. No relations came to stay with her, and yet she never seemed to feel the loneliness of her life oppressive. We saw a good deal of her. In the spring and summer evenings we grew quite accustomed to see her come in at the little side gate, and join my father on the lawn, or in the deep bay window where he habitually sat among his books. Her coming to Despard Court made a great difference in his life, and even in his ways; he became more companionable with my brother and myself, and he began to take a more practical interest in me.

"When that fatal discovery was made respecting the imprudence which had impaired even the small remainder of my father's property, Lady Olive Despard was taken into his confidence on the occasion, and when Griffith's being placed in Kindersley and Conybeare's bank was decided upon—to the ruin and overthrow of my hopes and visions—the full approval of Lady Olive Despard counted for much in my father's satisfaction with the scheme.

"All this had occurred some time previously to that memorable occasion on which I had parted with my youthful illusions concerning 'the officers,' and experienced the delights of my first grown-up evening-party. Lady Olive Despard's seclusion had moderated itself in the interval, though she still led a very quiet life; and she was much liked and esteemed by all the Wrottesley folk. My father and Griffith still remained the chief among her friends, however; for, though she was very kind to me, and took a deep interest in me, I am sorry to say I did not welcome or return those sentiments as they deserved. I suppose all young people have the same stupid misapprehension of kind intentions, and the same touchy dread and suspicion of interference which I exhibited early in our intercourse with Lady Olive Despard, and which she, with her usual good sense, ignored. She did not, however, persist in trying to teach me or benefit me against my will; she waited, I have since thought, for more reasonable and propitious times. My father and Griffith might make as much of her as they liked; they might tell her everything concerning her own affairs, and as much as they knew about mine, but they should not force me to be confidential with her. They did not make the attempt, and she gave no sign that she perceived my stubborn mood. She was evenly, frankly kind to me always.

"My first grown-up dinner-party was, like my first grown-up evening-party, distinguished by three circumstances, of no very notable importance in appearance, but which meant something in my after-life.

"Lady Olive Despard received her company in a room which was called the Oak Drawing-room. It belonged to the oldest portion of Despard Court, and was a very fine and stately apartment, in a sombre style. The walls were panelled in black oak, very richly sculptured; and the ceiling was formed of the same, relieved by tracings of crimson and gold. From its centre hung a splendid chandelier of Venetian glass; and huge mirrors of the same, surmounted the lofty carved-oak chimney-pieces which occupied opposite ends of the room. The fireplaces were open, the back and sides formed of quaint old Dutch tiles; and the heavy logs blazed upon the wide hearths, behind dogs represented by brazen griffins, who held the ancestral shield of the Despards between their claws. The deeply-embrasured windows were hung with curtains of crimson satin, and a rich carpet of the same warm colour covered the oaken floor.

"Griffith and I were among the earliest to arrive. In fact, when we entered the Oak Drawing-room, Lady Olive Despard and two gentlemen were its only occupants. Lady Olive, who wore her almost invariable dress—a black velvet gown, with some simple pearl ornaments—was looking remarkably well, and, for her, almost excited. One of the gentlemen was standing by a table on which lay some volumes of engravings. He was examining one of these with the absent-mindedness of the before-dinner period, standing with his back to the door, but he turned as we were announced, and I recognised my partner in the first and other dances at Mrs. Lipscott's party of the week before. This is, of course, not one of the three incidents which are distinct in my remembrance of my first grown-up dinner-party; but I just mention it. The second gentleman—this is one of the incidents—was a tall, handsome man with a fair moustache, and a complexion which told of much exposure to weather, and Lady Olive introduced him to me as her brother, Lord Barr.

"We were all talking very pleasantly, and I was enjoying myself much more than I should have thought it possible, beforehand, that I could enjoy myself on so trying an occasion, when a fresh arrival made itself audible; and Mr. and Miss Kindersley were announced. I looked towards the doorway eagerly, for the names quickened my curiosity, and my eyes lighted on a very lovely, very young girl, whose beauty was sufficiently refined and sentimental to fulfil the Keepsake ideal without its silliness. This is the second incident which marks that evening in my memory.

"The third is of later occurrence in the course of it, and is a very simple matter indeed.

"It was a splendid starlight night, perfectly dry and clear, and the ground was crisp with seasonable Christmas frost. The distance between Despard Court and the Dingle House was very short, and I was well wrapped up, so we walked home, Griffith and I. My partner at the Lipscotts accompanied us. We talked chiefly of Lord Barr, with whom, it appeared, my partner at the Lipscotts had travelled, all over Europe and some part of Asia, for two years. He gave Lady Olive's brother a high character, and spoke of him with a pleasant enthusiasm. He bade us good-night at the little gate of the lawn, and turned back towards Wrottesley. As Griffith and I were crossing the lawn to the porch, I said to my brother:

"'Did anything occur to annoy papa to-day? He seemed very thoughtful and absent this evening.'

"'I don't quite know,' was Griffith's answer—'for I was so late I had barely time to dress for dinner—whether there was anything to annoy him; but he told me he had had a letter from Australia.'

"'From Australia, Griffith! Who on earth does papa know in Australia? I never heard him speak of any friend there, did you?'

"'No, never; and I don't think the letter is from a friend, if by a friend we mean anyone he is fond of. He told me it was from our mother's brother, Mr. Pemberton.'

"'What! Our unknown uncle who has been in Australia since long before we were born, or, at least, before I was! How very odd! I wonder what the letter says.'

"'I don't know at all. But father said we should hear all about it to-morrow.'

"I said 'Good night' to Griffith at the door of his room, and went to my own in quite a pleasurable frame of mind. I was young enough to find pleasure in uncertainty, to forecast no evil from tidings which were to be learnt to-morrow."

LETTERS AND LETTER-WRITERS.

STATESMEN.

Carlyle has given us his opinion of the letters of Cromwell. He calls them "good," but very wisely does not claim for them eloquence, elegance, or always even clearness of expression. They were written, says the Protector's biographer, with far other than literary aims, in the very flame and conflagration of a revolutionary struggle, and with an eye to the despatch of indispensable pressing business, and "for such end they are well written." Superfluity the hurried general had to discard. "With unwieldy movement, yet with a great solid step, he presses through towards his object." "Cromwell, emblem of the dumb-English, is," says the Patriarch of Chelsea, "interesting to me by the very inadequacy of his speech."

Cromwell's original letters are described by the editor as having no paragraphs, and the conclusion or postscript is often written crosswise on the margin, indicating the impatience of the soldier-writer in the days before blotting-paper. The spelling and punctuation are as good as usual among educated persons of those days.

A few preliminary biographical notes on this Gideon of the Puritans will be useful as casting a cross-light on the portions of letters that we give, and will serve to freshen up the memory of our readers.

Long previous to Mr. Carlyle's labours, English historians had exposed the falsehood and folly of the old Cavalier-stories about the Protector and his family. The merest dabbler in local history soon found out that Cromwell was no mere Huntingdonshire farmer and brewer, but the son of a gentleman of old family, and in a far-off way connected with the royal race of Stuart. Cromwell's father was both the son and brother of a knight. Mr. Carlyle has also proved that Oliver was of kin to that Cromwell, Earl of Essex, who began the rough Reformation in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and ended on the scaffold; and by that luckless ravager of church lands, property in the fat Fen country came to the Cromwells. From the village of Cromwell, on the east border of Nottinghamshire, the Cromwells derived their name. There is a theory that the family was originally Welsh, and called Williams. It proves the standing of the race that in 1603, the year of King James's accession, the king visited Hinchinbrook, where Oliver's grandfather, old Sir Henry, "the golden knight," lived, and knighted Oliver's uncle among other Huntingdonshire gentlemen.

The letters of Oliver's childhood have all perished. Of his bird-nesting and the wild-duck shooting in the swamps no record has been preserved; no school-boy letters of his to his six demure sisters are existing; no letter of his to his sturdy cousin John Hampden in Buckinghamshire remains; none from Sidney Sussex College, about the time Shakespeare was dying. When Oliver was eighteen, King James, on his way to Scotland, again visited Hinchinbrook, and Laud and the Duke of Buckingham were in the royal suite. That same year, according to Mr. Carlyle, Cromwell went to London, after his father's death, and entered at an inn of court, probably Gray's Inn, though Noble says Lincoln's. He now became acquainted with the family of Sir James Bouchier, probably a rich furrier of the City, whose fair daughter Elizabeth he married, two years later, at St. Giles's, Cripplegate (where Milton was buried). The young Huntingdonshire gentleman then went back to farm, hunt, attend quarter sessions, and talk politics, for the Prince Charles was seeking a Popish bride, and the faithful were bewailing the prospect of such a union. About this time Cromwell began to suffer from hypochondriacal attacks, sent for Dr. Simcott at midnight, and fancied the town cross would fall upon him as he passed by it. A few years later we find Cromwell as a Parliamentary captain sent to search the house of his uncle, Sir Oliver, at Ramsay Mere, for his uncle was a Royalist and Malignant. The next year, 1628, Oliver Cromwell, Esq., of Huntingdon, appears in Westminster as Puritan member for Huntingdon, and on that eventful day his life really begins. In the unruly Parliament of 1629 the member for Huntingdon makes his first speech. Two years later Cromwell sells his Huntingdonshire property and buys a grazing farm at St. Ives. Seven of Cromwell's nine children (five sons and four daughters) were by this time born. In 1642 Cromwell becomes colonel of his regiment, offers to lend three hundred pounds towards reducing the Irish rebellion, seizes the magazine of Cambridge Castle, and stops the Royalists removing some twenty thousand pounds of university plate to King Charles's treasury.

The earliest existing letters of Cromwell date from 1642, when he was busy fighting for the Eastern Association. He is terribly in earnest, and quick and peremptory in his orders. The sentences are like pistol shots, as, for example, to Auditor Squire: "Let the saddler see to the horse-gear. I learn from one many are ill-served. If a man has not good weapons, horse, and harness, he is as nought." His eyes are everywhere. Again to Samuel Squire—he wants money: "Pray now open thy pocket and lend me one hundred and fifty pieces until my rent-day, when I will repay; or say one hundred pieces until then." He is to send them by Clister the trumpeter, who is to ride hard. "P.S.—I hope you have forwarded my mother the silks you got for me in London, also those for my dame. If not, pray do not fail;" and Squire, if he rides by Cromwell's house, is told to go in and tell Oliver's dame he is off to Essex, and he is to use the house like his (Squire's) own at

Oundle, or "Cromwell will be cross." In a letter to the same Squire, Oliver writes with a trooper's glee: "Desborow has come in with good spoil. Some three thousand pounds, I reckon." To Captain Berry at his quarters, Oundle, the same year, the zealous officer writes, to inform him of a secret meeting of the Malignants to be held at Lowestoff. Berry is to come at once with his troop ere sundown, and to let no one know his route. A travelling fish-hawker to the Cambridge colleges had told Cromwell of this plot, and handed over a letter from King Charles. Cromwell was rough enough sometimes, as these sharp letters show. In one note to Cornet Squire about searching for arms at a certain house, he tells him that behind the oven is where they hide the arms, and that he is "to hang the fellow out of hand, and I am your warrant. For he shot a boy at Picton Bee, by the Spinney, the widow's son, her only support." The cornet is then told to go riding through Stamford, Spalding, and Wisbeach. "Wildman is gone by Lincoln; you may meet, but do not know him—he will not you. I would you could get into Lynn, for I hear they are building a nest there we must rifle, I sadly fear." The following letter, from Cambridge, 1642, sounds like the clink of a sword:

"To Mr. Squire at Godmanchester:

"Sir,—Since we came back I learn no men have got the money as I ordered. Let me hear no more of this, but pay as I direct, as we are about hard work, I think. Yours to mind, Oliver Cromwell."

The same month an attack is planned on some Cavalier foragers. There is to be no child's play. Oliver writes to Cornet Squire: "Tell Berry to ride in, also Montague, and cut home, as no mercy ought to be shown these rovers, who are only robbers, and not honourable soldiers." He then tells him to call as he rides by at Costessy Park, and take away a case of arms and Mr. Jermingham's harness, "which lies in the wall by his bedside" (and here appears the gentleman in Oliver), "but move not the old weapons of his father's or his family trophies. Be tender of this, as you respect my wishes of one gentleman to another."

In one of these picturesque letters, dated April, 1642, Cromwell writes to Squire, at his quarters in Bridge-street, Peterborough, to tell him that his son is going with two troops of the regiment to take his Suffolk prisoners to London, by order of the Speaker; and he begs Squire to get him a new steel cap; it is to be fluted, with the plume-case set on well behind, and to be lined with good shamay leather. "If you light on Eighty-one" (the cypher for some Malignant, and here come sharp words), "pray take care of him, and bring him on to me. I cannot let such escape; life and property is lost by such villains. If resistance is given, pistol him. No nonsense can be held with such; he is dangerous as a mad bull, and must be quieted by some means. This villain got our men into a strife at Fakenham, some three weeks since, and two got shot down and nine wounded; and the others lost some twenty or thirty on their side, and all for his mischief." To some tardy volunteers Oliver writes: "The East Foot are come in, to some six hundred men, I learn. Say so to these Biggleswade dormice." In a letter of 1643, to Squire, at Oundle, Cromwell writes, in stern anger: "Order Islam to keep the bridge" (it is needful), "and shoot anyone passing who has not a pass. The service is one that we must not be nice upon to gain our ends. So show him my words for it. Tell Captain Russell" (here's a wigging for Russell), "my mind runs on his men's drinking the poor man's ale and not paying for it. I will not allow any plunder; so pay the man and stop their pay to make it up. I will cashier officers and men, if such is done in future." It was this perpetual rifling and robbing even the poor that made the Cavaliers so hateful to the country labourers, and led even to the rumour of their eating the stolen babies.

Watchful captain, watchful father, Cromwell writes anxiously, in this year 1643, to Squire: "Henry has borrowed of you fifty pieces, I learn. Do not let him have any more, for he does not need it; and I hope better of you than go against my mind. I rest your friend,

"Oliver Cromwell."

A little later he writes to Squire, that a dangerous man with a peaked blue-black beard had landed on the coast from Holland, and gone on to Lynn, probably a Spaniard. "See to him. He will needs cross the Wash; stop him, and bring him to me. Be off quickly." Squire caught the man at Tilney, after a tussle, in which two troopers were hit, and the blue-bearded man was "sore cut, even to loss of life."

Presently, Cromwell hears that the Cavaliers have swooped down on three-score fat beasts near Thorney; and he writes to Captain Montague, impetuously: "Pray call all in and follow them; they cannot have gone far. Give no quarter, as they shed blood at Bourne and slew three poor men not in arms. So make haste. From your friend and commander,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

Cromwell's zeal and promptitude as an officer are strongly manifest in these early letters. He has an eye to everything, and will have honesty and justice from everyone. In August, 1643, he writes to Squire to complain of some of the Suffolk troops requiring passes to go home to harvest. He is going to surround Lynn, and clear out the Malignants. Frankly he will not grant their unreasonable request. "Have they not had great manifesting of God's bounty and grace in so short a time? I am filled with surprise at this fresh beguiling of these selfish men. Let them write home and hire others to work. I will grant no fresh passes. The Lord General is against it, and so I am fixed in my mind. Do you ride over to Swaffham and buy oats for two thousand horse." Another letter to Squire is about a church, which Captain Montague has refused to help to "purify." Cromwell is roused: "If the men are not of a mind," he writes, "to obey this order, I will cashier them, the whole troop. I heed God's house as much as anyone; but vanities and trumpery give no honour to God, nor do idols serve him; neither do painted windows make men more pious. Let them do as Parliament bids them, or else go home." In a subsequent letter, January, 1645, Oliver writes to Squire, to buy dragoon horses, and offers him sixty pieces for "the Black" he had won at Horncastle fight, as he wants it for his son, who has a mind for him. A letter of 1644, from Cromwell to an officer, complains of his men refusing to wear the new red uniforms. "Say this to your men," says Oliver: "wear them or go home. I stand no nonsense from any one. It is a needful thing to be as one in colour, much ill having been from diversity of clothes, to slaying of friends by friends. Sir, I pray you heed this."

Cromwell's longer letters, especially his domestic ones, are full of kindness, blended with those frequent religious allusions peculiar to the Puritans of that age, and which we have no right, in such a consistent man, to consider as mere formulas. Here is one, written to a brother-in-law, which is a good example of his ordinary style. It is a letter of sympathy, written to a friend, whose son had just been killed in battle, and it is full of tenderness of heart:

"To my loving brother, Colonel Valentine Walton: These,

"Leaguer before York, 5th July, 1644.

"DEAR SIR,—It's our duty to sympathise in all mercies; and to praise the Lord together in chastisement or trials, that so we may sorrow together. . . . . The left wing, which I commanded, being our own horse, saving a few Scots in our rear, beat all the prince's horse. God made them as stubble to our swords. We charged their regiments of foot with our horse, and routed all we charged. The particulars I cannot relate now; but I believe of twenty thousand the prince hath not four thousand left. Give glory, all the glory, to God.

"Sir, God hath taken away your eldest son by a cannon shot. It broke his leg. We were necessitated to have it cut off, whereof he died.

"Sir, you know my own trials this way"—Cromwell had lost a son, Oliver, during the war—"but the Lord supported me with this, that the Lord took him into the happiness we all pant for and live for. There is your precious child full of glory, never to know sin or sorrow any more. He was a gallant young man, exceedingly gracious. God give you His comfort. Before his death he was so full of comfort that to Frank Russel and myself, he could not express it, 'It was so great above his pain.' This he said to us. Indeed it was admirable. A little after he said, 'One thing lay upon his spirit.' I asked him what that was. He told me it was, 'That God had not suffered him to be any more the executioner of his enemies.' At his fall, his horse being killed with the bullet, and as I am informed three horses more, I am told he bid them open to the right and left, that he might see the rogues run. Truly he was exceedingly beloved in the army of all that knew him. But few knew him; for he was a precious young man, fit for God. You have cause to bless the Lord. He is a glorious saint in Heaven, wherein you ought exceedingly to rejoice. Let this drink up your sorrow; seeing these are not feigned words to comfort you, but the thing is so real and undoubted a truth. You may do all things by the strength of Christ. Seek that, and you shall easily bear your trial. Let His public mercy to the church of God make you so forget your private sorrow. The Lord be your strength; so prays your truly faithful and loving brother, OLIVER CROMWELL.

"My love to your daughter, and my cousin Perceval, sister Desborow, and all friends with you."

To his daughters Cromwell writes always with profound tenderness; and a letter to Bridget Ireton, in 1646 (the year of her marriage to Ireton) runs thus:

"Your friends in Ely are well; your sister Claypole is, I trust in mercy, exercised with some perplexed thought. She sees her own vanity and carnal mind bewailing it; she seeks after (as I hope also) what will satisfy. And thus, to be a seeker is to be of the best side next to a finder; and such an one shall every faithful, humble seeker be at the end. Happy seeker, happy finder! Who ever tasted that the Lord is gracious without some sense of self-vanity and badness? Who ever tasted that graciousness of His and could go less in desire—less than pressing after full enjoyment? Dear heart, press on, and let not husband, let not anything, cool thy affections after Christ . . . That which is best worthy of love in thy husband is that of the image of Christ he bears. Look at that and love it best, and all the rest for that. I pray for thee and him, and do so for me. My service and dear affections to the general and generaless. I hear she is very kind to thee: it adds to all other obligations. I am thy dear father, OLIVER CROMWELL."

The sister Claypole, mentioned in this letter, was the sister who it is said was a Royalist in her heart, and on her death-bed reproved her father for his conduct to Charles; but the story is entirely improbable. She seems to have been gayer, and fonder of pleasure, than her sisters.

And now, breaking away from the Iron Man who broke royalty to pieces, let us turn to a great statesman and heroic man of a far later age—the great Earl of Chatham. This son of a worthy Cornish gentleman began his career at Eton and Cambridge. He then became a cornet of dragoons, made the grand tour, and went into Parliament as member for Old Sarum, a grassy hillock near Salisbury, that at that time returned a representative. He soon began to distinguish himself by his attacks on Sir Robert Walpole, and acquired a name for a high and classical style of eloquence. The young debater attacked with bitterness the small German policy of the king, and all acts of the ministers that trenched on our national liberty. For this Walpole, with a mean revenge, unworthy of his frank, hearty nature, deprived him of the cornetcy; and the king, always small and spiteful, refused to accept him as secretary of war in the Newcastle administration. In 1746, however, Pitt, from sheer necessity, was appointed vice-treasurer of Ireland, and afterwards treasurer and paymaster of the army, with a seat in the Privy Council. Such a man gravitated irresistibly towards high honours. The king, when Pitt came to kiss hands on his new appointment, is said to have turned aside, and shed tears of hurt pride. In 1754 Pitt married into the powerful Granville family, and soon after, objecting to the great war alliances England was making, merely to protect Hanover, he was dismissed hurriedly from office. His great popularity, however, soon compelled his recall; and after defeating his great rival Fox he was constituted secretary for the southern department. His persistent objection to the war in Germany again compelled his dismissal, but popular clamour soon compelled his recall; and this time to the premiership. He controlled the king, and seems to have told him the truth with a generous frankness, unusual even in faithful ministers. When the Duke of Cumberland entered into a disastrous treaty with the French in Germany, the king craftily declared he had given his son no orders to do so. "But full powers," replied Pitt, with firm sarcasm, "very full powers, sir." As a minister—honest, enlightened, with large views and great energy of mind—Pitt carried everything before him; and our troops were victorious in every region where our banners flew. At home he ruled with a high hand and a comprehensive glance.

On the accession of George the Third, Pitt, finding that Lord Bute thwarted his wishes for instant war with Spain, resigned, accepting a pension of three thousand pounds a year, his wife becoming Baroness of Chatham; and, soon after, Sir William Pynsent disinherited his relatives and left his vast property to Pitt, who did not relax his grasp from any sentimental reasons.

In 1766 "the great commoner" lost favour somewhat with the people, by taking office again as Lord Privy Seal, and accepting the title of earl. The rest of the cabinet feebly supporting him, Chatham soon retired, and never took office more. But though from a boy tormented with hereditary gout, Chatham still frequently spoke in the House, and defended the national liberty. He opposed general warrants, opposed the taxes that led to the American war, and blamed the house for their unfair proceedings in regard to the Westminster election. In his speech on search warrants he uttered those famous words: "By the British constitution," said this great speaker, "every man's house is his castle! Not that it is surrounded by walls and battlements; it may be a straw-built hut; every wind of heaven may whistle round it; all the elements of nature may enter it; but the king cannot—the king durst not." This has the true ring; so again in that dying speech of his against surrendering America, he rose at the end to true eloquence when he said, "Shall this great kingdom, which has survived, whole and entire, the Danish depredations, the Scottish inroads, and the Norman conquest, that has stood the threatened invasion of the Spanish Armada, now fall prostrate before the House of Bourbon? Surely, my lords, this nation is no longer what it was! Shall a people that seventeen years ago was the terror of the world, now stoop so low as to tell its ancient inveterate enemy, 'Take all we have, only give us peace!' It is impossible. I am not, I confess, well informed of the resources of this kingdom, but I trust it has still sufficient to maintain its just rights. But, my lords, any state is better than despair. Let us at least make one effort, and if we must fall, let us fall like men."

The classic scene that followed when Chatham, rising to reply to the Duke of Richmond, fell back fainting for death in the arms of his friends, will be remembered as long as English history endures. A public funeral and a tomb in the Abbey were the generous but inadequate returns of a nation's gratitude. Four thousand pounds a year was annexed to the earldom, and twenty thousand pounds of the earl's debts were at once liquidated.

Though, no doubt, fretful as an incessant invalid, and often cold and haughty, yet the earl moved grandly and royally through the world. Wilkes says he had a manly figure; and before he spoke a syllable, the keen lightning of his eye spoke the high aspect of his soul. "There was a kind of fascination in his look when he eyed any one askance. Nothing could withstand the force of that contagion." Fluent Murray faltered, and even Fox shrank back from an adversary "fraught with fire unquenchable." He was the sort of man you never saw without his wig and sword, and he was impatient of the slightest contradiction, as most men born to rule are.

We select from the great earl's letters the following, which were written to his nephew, the young Lord Camelford, as being full of courteous dignity and worthy of a grand old gentleman as Pitt was:

"Hayes, Sunday, July 17th, 1774.

"Need I tell my dear William that his letter, received this morning, diffused general joy here. To know that he is well and happy, and to be happy ourselves, is one and the same thing. I am glad that chambers, hall, and tufted robe continue to please, and make no doubt that all the nine, in their several departments of charming, will sue for your love with all their powers of enchantment."

The next letter contains grave advice on demeanour, to which an old courtier may be excused for attaching somewhat more importance than we in these careless Jack and Harry days care to do.

". . . . I am very glad you have taken a fencing-master; that exercise will give you some manly, firm, and graceful attitudes, open your chest, place your head upright, and plant you well upon your legs. As to the use of the sword, it is well to know it; but remember, my dearest nephew, it is a science of defence; and that a sword can never be employed by the hand of a man of virtue in any other cause. As to the carriage of your person, be particularly careful, as you are tall and thin, not to get a habit of stooping; nothing has so poor a look; above all things avoid contracting any peculiar gesticulations of the body, or movements of the muscles of the face. It is rare to see in anyone a graceful laughter; it is generally better to smile than to laugh out, especially to contract a habit of laughing at small or no jokes. Sometimes it would be affectation, or worse, mere moroseness, not to laugh heartily when the truly ridiculous circumstances of an incident, or the true pleasantry and wit of a thing, call for and justify it; but the trick of laughing frivolously is by all means to be avoided. Risu inepto res ineptior nulla est! Now as to politeness. Many have attempted definitions of it; I believe it is best to be known by description, definition not being able to comprise it. I would, however, venture to call it benevolence in trifles, or the preference of others to ourselves in little daily, hourly occurrences in the commerce of life."

WINTER SONG.

(FROM THE JAPANESE.)

KEEN the wind from Fuji's height,
Sweeping o'er the plain,
Nips the leaves with iron might
And drives the icy rain.
Makes the brook a torrent run,
Hides with flying clouds the sun,
And howls a mad refrain.

Weary lag the traveller's feet
On the mountain way;
Dark the path—the cruel sleet
Dims the light of day.
The village buried from his view,
Where to his love he bade adieu,
And heard her parting lay.

O she must wait his coming long,
As swallows wait the spring!
Although her lips have framed the song
To give him welcoming;
High on the mountain-path the storm
Has veiled in snow her lover's form,
And she his dirge must sing.

LEARNING TO COOK;

A CHILDREN'S LESSON.

THERE is a kitchen—in St. Mary's Clergy-house, Soho—wherein is sought to be taught real artisan cooking to real artisan children. All persons are welcome to see its class of cookery, are even invited to partake of the dishes, they have been lucky enough to see discoursed upon, and cooked. It will do all persons good to be acquainted with an institution so full of enterprise and charitable endeavour.

The Clergy-house was visited on a Saturday morning; on no other morning would a visit have been of any use. Artisan children are at school of another sort (or should be) the other days of the working week; they have only the Saturday vacant. It makes Learning to Cook a slow process; for twenty lessons (the Clergy-house course) mean, practically, half a year. A long time for little girls of ten and twelve years of age to keep theory in their heads, to fight the battle of good precepts against the haste and waste, the ill-conditions and ill-practices, of home. It belongs, though, to the very circumstances under which the girls live, to the very reason why the girls need culinary tuition at all; it must be put up with, therefore, and things be left where they are.

"Is it right for strangers to come in?" was a preliminary inquiry, when the kitchen-stairs of St. Mary's Clergy-house had been descended, and there was some bewilderment, in the darkness and the strangeness, as to which was the proper door.

"It is quite right. This is the way; and we are delighted to see anybody good enough to come."

The speaker was the lady exercising the new ladies'-work of teaching to cook; it was the sweet-girl graduate in a recently-formed school; it was, let us say in preference, the purple-hooded Don-na of the last-born university, in person giving entrance, in person doing the honours of her freshly-formed domain.

This professor of a revolutionary profession was a model of what her fellow-professors ought to be. She was young, supple, clear-voiced; she had a penetrative yet sympathetic manner; she was as patient as she was painstaking and energetic. She was dressed in a gown of a light-coloured material that would wash; she had an apron over it that was a real cover-robe, not a piece of filagree and pretentious art; she had good solid boots; yet the elegance of her could be seen in the natty lace about her neck—in, more still, the close and effective coiling of her brightly-glossed hair. She was not to be seen to advantage on that particular morning, however, she made known in a welcoming explanatory way. She liked to have ten pupils; that was her pet number, although she sometimes had as many as fifteen; but, owing to an examination on other subjects going on, she was afraid she should be found reduced to seven. Another cause for reduction of effect, and more serious difficulty, was soon apparent when a woman, the usual denizen of the kitchen, returned, bonneted and basketed, from some of the neighbouring shops.

"There's the eggs, butter, sugar, rice, currants, peas, parsley, carrots, onions, mutton," she said, "and they'll send the milk directly; but I can't get no pettitoes, nor yet no rabbits."

The Donna raised her eyes. "Why, I thought I had seen plenty of rabbits everywhere; and pettitoes, surely, can be had all the year round!"

"They hadn't got none," was the stolid and utterly prohibitory answer.

It was the usual barricade raised by indifference before the alert soul. A road should not be found; a slight deviation to the right or left would lay it bare and straight; but a boulder stood in the midway, and on that boulder only should the gaze be fixed. The result was that the Donna was obliged to alter her whole method and imagination. There being no time (and possibly no authority) for a battle, it was the best thing to be done.

"Dear me! It's very provoking!" she cried. "I had brought down my receipts for boiled rabbit, and such a nice butter sauce—here is my parsley for it—and one of the curates who is going to dine with us to-day particularly wanted to see pettitoes! And after having focussed my ideas on one set of things, I find myself quite put out to have to think about another!"

The putting out was overcome, however. The woman was despatched for some salted pork, in place of the missing meats, for some suet, and a small paper-bag of flour; and with the menu standing haricot mutton, Cornish pasties, boiled pork, pease pudding, potatoes, baked rice, hasty pudding, custard, and (for a special pupil) apple méringue, the business of the lesson was ready to be commenced.

To comprehend what this was, there must be a word first about the kitchen. It was simply the ordinary kitchen pertaining to the Clergy-house—its size sixteen feet, perhaps, by twenty, its place underground, its walls whitewashed, its windows high up at the ceiling, and too little relieved of the street's dust and dirt. Its furniture comprised Windsor chairs, a dresser, an ordinary range, a cupboard, a scrubbed table (with some propable wall-boards to help it), and a red-tiled floor. It was right that its features should have had thus such striking similarity to the features of its kin; under no other conditions could the cooking taught in it be worth its salt. The one drawback was, that as dimensions were small, the number of pupils was obliged to be small also; in this, though, again there was advantage, for it made it much more like helping "mother" at home, and the little women were not confused by space and grandeur it was impossible they should see elsewhere. As things were, they fitted in excellently.

"Ah, Rosie, you've managed to come, then," was the Donna's greeting to a little pupil. "Come this way, and help Eliza to pare these apples. Get a plate and a sharp knife —— but are your hands clean?"

They were held up to the pleasant and inquiring eyes.

"Better wash them," was the good-humoured verdict. "Then we're quite safe. Run off to the scullery"—it adjoined the kitchen, and could be seen into by an opening, or sliding window, in the wall—"use plenty of water, and be back quickly."

The child disappeared—she was an ordinary merino-frocked, holland-aproned, plaited-haired, little school-girl of ten or twelve years of age, as were all the rest—the child returned, and she and her appointed Eliza were soon taking the rosy cheeks off a pyramid of apples, and laying them skinless on a couple of plates.

Two more little girls entered, mated in the time of their arrival, as they were in the labour to which they were set.

"Now you two shall take," was the Donna's decision, "let me see—shall take rice pudding. You shall wash the rice, and wash the currants, and beat the eggs, and go through it thoroughly. Get all your things ready first. Pie-dish—that yellow one; it's deeper. Basin, spoon, cup—always break each egg into a cup first, to see if it's good, or you may spoil all the others. Saucepan. Now then, that packet is your rice; that your sugar; this the currants."

A few more directions as to plenty of water to wash the rice, plenty to wash the currants, and so forth, and the little girls were soon really and absolutely at work, and fairly interested in their task. A fifth child presented herself, and was set to scrub potatoes, as being the best way to properly wash them; and then two pretty and pleasant young women came, and made the seven pupils complete. These last were teachers of more or less advance themselves (of the artisan, or "Three R." sort, under The Revised Code); they had only become scholars again to take an "extra subject," though possibly it might not add to their professional incomes by tangible and parliamentary grant. The younger of them shall be called Ethel; the elder shall be known as Miss Cousins.

"Now, let me see," said the watchful Donna, collecting herself from thoughts of a saucepan that was for the potatoes, of a saucepan that was for the peas, of a saucepan that was for the pork, of various small saucepans that were for rice and apples and gelatine. "I am glad you have come, Ethel and Miss Cousins; it's very nice and kind of you. Now, who is for mutton haricot? Oh, it was for you, Ethel, I remember. Here are the carrots and onions. Wash the carrots, please, and scrape them; then peel the onions, but save the peel, because we can make browning out of that, for gravy; and then slice them all, and fry them. You'll find a frying-pan, but be sure it's perfectly clean, and—and after that, I'll tell you more. Now, Miss Cousins, you—oh yes, I remember—you wanted apple méringue. It's a treat, this, I must tell you"—this was to strange eyes and ears; looking and hearing their first of the Donna of St. Mary's Clergy-house—"it's not artisan cookery at all, but we are just having it as an extra. Quarter your apples; core them (the children can leave them now, and I'll set them to something else); then stew them, and pass them through a sieve. There's your receipt for it; oh yes, and here is yours, Ethel, for the haricot."

It was a regular business, this of handing about and consulting receipts. The method was (as well as substituting this wrong word for recipe) that each scholar should work from directions the Donna had written down, and then, at the end of the working, write it down in a book for herself. One (young) scholar's writing peeped into was worth the peeping. She had "potatoce" in it, and "peaces," and "peper," and "devide." There was somebody else, though, older, polished up to teachership (known, it shall be wickedly disclosed, by the name of Ethel), not without her little piece of ignorance; can it be a wonder it was somewhat ripely rife in the case of a small companion?

"What is this, please?" had been the way this matter of Ethel's had been disclosed; and she had her pen at a place on a printed form on which she was making some departmental returns. "I don't understand these letters?"

"Don't understand which letters?" said the Donna, uprooting herself, with a visible effort, from a basin and spoon, on which her eyes and thoughts were busily intent. "Which letters, show me? Where?"

Ethel was very earnest; in full expectation of some valuable culinary elucidation. "Here," she said, "these—K.C.B.!"

The Donna might have laughed. But the Donna merely said kindly, "Ah, that is nothing to do with cooking, that means Knight Commander of the Bath;" and it was not till she was passing back to the business of the butter and pease, that she gave a bright flash of the eye towards where she knew there would be appreciation.

May there not also be a similar episode placed on record against the lively little Miss Cousins? *She* was sprinkling powdered white sugar over her accomplished apple méringue, flushed with the pride as well as the labour of it; and, powdered white sugar having evidently come under her notice for the first time, she looked at it curiously, and sought for information about it (as she did very properly throughout) by asking an eager question.

"How nice this is!" she said; letting the sugar pelter down daintily from her spoon. "What is it called? And can you get it anywhere?"

"It is to be had at any grocer's," replied the Donna, losing nothing of her patience. "And you may call it powdered sugar, or crushed sugar, or sugar-dust. And there is yet another name for it—so there is—caster-sugar."

"Caster!" was the echo of the little Miss Cousins, in deliberation. "Caster! Now, whatever for, I wonder? Oh yes, I can suppose! Caster—like castor oil!"

Now, the motive for setting down these little facts is not for the amusement to be found in them. It is for the proof they afford, that instruction in cookery was really being taken down at last into classes where instruction was deficient, and where instruction was no pastime, but a real living gift.

How difficult was the path, though, of the Donna, in her active work of instruction! Let no lady, let it for once and for all be understood, take to cooking-teaching, unless she has a masculine power of organisation, and the frame and the spirit of a Boadicea. A glance at the Donna of St. Mary's Clergy-house would give assurance of this, if any minds could contemplate a cooking-teacher's labours, and yet be led to doubt. The Donna had to mount a Windsor chair to reach a dish, say, that was her ideal; she had to attend to the two kitchen fires, and stir, or flatten, or heap them up with fuel, as emergencies required; she had to plunge her hands into cold water; to wring out boiling cloths; to have her fingers white with flour, and black with soot, and busy in a minute mixing grease; she had to carry gigantic saucepans, filled nearly to the brim; she had to stagger under these, and yet to hoist them up to the required place upon the range, where they could get a boil upon a blaze, or a gentle simmer upon the slower hob.

"You are wonderful!" was the admiration that could not be withheld when this was seen, and when it was contrasted with what other ladies would call work, and would wish to be "genteelly" paid for.

Her powers of organisation were no whit less apparent. She had the whole onus upon her of the nine dishes that were preparing, it must be remembered; yet she turned from pupil to pupil, and from food to food, all the points well in hand, with no sign of confusion or bewilderment.

"Now, that boiled pork! Who is looking after it?" was her cry; her own occupation being to see that the carrots and onions for the haricot were being fried properly. "Is it yours, Ethel? Then run, and see how it is getting on."

"Ah, that is not the way to chop suet, child!" came another speech at another moment. "You'll be sure, that way, to chop your fingers as well. Put your finger-tips in, like this, and let your knuckles meet your knife. You will never be cut then; your knuckles will save you."

"Rosie! Rosie! Clean those scales before you put the meat into them!" The Donna had rapidly turned her eyes elsewhere. "There! That is better. And it weighs, what? Two pounds how many ounces? Two pounds five? Then reckon it as two pounds and a half, and, with half an hour to every pound, that will take—— ? An hour and a quarter; yes; and, as we are to dine at two o'clock, we ought to put it down at——?"

The two little puzzle-eyed women, to whom the Donna spoke, had no powers for this. "Come, think!" she said, stimulating them to bring all their arithmetic to bear. She said it, though, without waiting whilst their poor young brains worked. They had to be left, stony and adrift, and she was off with an important word for somebody else.

"Your rice pudding? Quickly, to the oven, or it will be getting burnt! A cloth, child! It is too hot to touch without! Now, steadily, steadily; carry it to the dresser and put it down. So."

"Now, Ethel," for, before the hissing dish had left the little pupil's hands, attention was wanted in another direction, "we'll put the vegetables and mutton into the saucepan to stew. I'll hold the saucepan; you put them in. Carefully; don't let any be spilt. You've washed your mutton, of course?"

Ethel had; and there was opportunity for the calculating children to be turned to, to be asked if they had yet done their sum. The Donna's kind eyes looked closely into the little faces; her voice was just as conciliatory and encouraging. "Well, have you found it out?" she said. "If the meat will take an hour and a quarter, and it is to be done by two o'clock, can you tell me when it ought to be put down?"

Most undoubtedly not. Subtraction had never been put in such a form (although it well might—when school arithmetic books reach more new editions, and cooking, somehow, gets thought of in accounts); so the children had to be released from the effort by being told, and had immediately to be set some other little matter to do.

"Come to this board here," this chanced to be. "This mutton wants cutting up for the Cornish pasties. Let me look at your hands. Oh, wash them, wash them, both of you! Never do anything with dirty hands! Always keep on washing, washing them!"

A look towards the visitors' corner seemed to give excuse for a visitor's practical remark: "Have you considered," it ran, "that the London poor cook in the 'parlours,' or the first and second and third floors; and that they have to carry down every drop of dirty water they have used, and to carry up every drop of fresh, from a far-away kitchen? Does not that make it an immense labour for them to do what you mean?"

"That is true," replied the Donna, pausing from a roll of her pastry-roller. "That is true; very true. But still"—she was quite vivid in her intention not to give up her point—"one would make everyone in love with cleanliness, you know, if one possibly could!"

"Miss Cousins!" was the next call to attention, through the aperture that showed the scullery, "your apples! you are forgetting them!"

Miss Cousins was jubilant when she had flown to the oven-door. "I am just in time!" she cried. "That side is capital! Another moment and"—— Had not the Donna saved her, her pet dish would have stood a ruin.

"Now beat the whites of your eggs,"

directed the Donna. "Pour them out on to a plate, and whip them with a knife."

Miss Cousins was diligent in her application. Willing as she was, though, merrily alert as she was, she sighed over what was but a ponderous proceeding.

"I will show you," the Donna said, from a critical watch of her from behind. "A quick touch is wanted, and a light one."

A quick touch it was, and a light one also. The Donna held the plate on the spread palm of her left hand, whilst she whipped with her right; and she poised it, as the froth rose, to the slant, to the straight, and up, and down, and to the right, and to the left, and now broad to head forward, and now suddenly to the back, with the bright celerity and adjustment of a juggler. After a dash of strokes, showing her fine skill, and her pride in the art she was professing, there was a rare cloud-like ball of beautiful unsubstantiality for Miss Cousins to use for her little work of decoration. There was a murmur of applause, too, but the Donna the next moment was deep in a new occupation.

"You are slicing those potatoes wrong!" she cried, taking knife and root from a pair of young apprentice-hands. "There is a particular way to slice potatoes for Cornish pasties!"

There was; and the Donna was its mistress. She did not cut the potato apple-wise, leaving sharp corners (it was uncooked) to protrude into the coming crust; she simply dwindled it away by some magic shredding that left it still a ball, as she sent it diligently round and round.

"Now for your crust," she said, standing over the small worker, and showing the necessary touch. "Mix the flour with suet. A suet crust, always, for Cornish pasties. Pour in the water. Mix, mix! Don't be afraid! Keep on. Now flour your pastry-board, and lay it on."

"Stay," she cried, motioning the child away that she might take her place. "We will have four; so I will make the first, to show you. Look. Roll your piece of paste out; round. Put your meat and vegetables in the middle. Then draw the edges of your crust into a little hill, or wall, at the top; pinch it together, and turn it over exactly like a hem. Do you see? Then straight on, quickly, and do the others."

Things went on in this way for three hours. If the Donna saw a saucepan wanted washing, she set a child to do it. If a knife were to be cleaned, a dish to be scraped, the scales to be removed, litter to be cleared away, a dropped thing to be picked up—her quick eye saw it, and she gave a prompt order for it to be done. Only once did she have to scold; it was when some knives were left to soak, and rust, in the dirty lake of water that was the sink. Only twice were her plans frustrated, and did she stand there foiled—the first time when small fingers let an egg drop to the floor, wasted; the second, when gracious attention to a visitor let some gelatine be on the fire too long, and get overdone. For one thing, the pupils had serious and primary interest in what they were cooking and helping to get cooked. They were to eat of it all, on its conclusion, at two o'clock. Profound policy, this; as judicious as it was humane. It made the fee for the lesson merely nominal; since it was only sixpence if the child were extra-parochial, threepence if it belonged to the church-schools, or were otherwise known to be poor and privileged; and since the child was fed for it, either way, and would get a dinner, of the rich and nutritious sort, that otherwise it would seldom see. It was a policy ruinous to the management, undoubtedly; for self-support could be no part of it, and it had necessarily to depend upon donations; but whilst the wages of the working-man are what they are, he cannot (be his habits unimpeachable, and his economy first-class) give his children the best food and the best instruction, and he must either refuse to let them have them, or allow them to be dependent for them on some sort of help.

The three hours that had passed had closed the practical cooking-lesson proper. With the pork boiling; with the mutton coming to a stew; with the pasties and the custard baking; with the potatoes flouring in the steam; with the méringue a testimony; with the rice-pudding cooling previous to being heated in the oven again; with the peas receiving their meed of butter and egg from the Donna herself (to give them the quality they required, to make them most nutritious); there was no active work but the hasty-pudding left, and that would have had no hastiness if it had been prepared an hour before it was to be served; the business was, therefore, to clear up all the implements and débris, to make the front-kitchen into a dining-hall, to write out the recipes, and lay the cloth. All helped. Ethel took a broom; the two biggest children gave a genuine good strong scrub to the table; the little ones collected plates and so forth, and trudged with them away; Miss Cousins calculated numbers and counted up her chairs, and before the centre-table was taken possession of by cruet and knives and forks, brought out pen, and ink, and paper, and told the assembled pupils how the materials they had been using had only cost six shillings, and, as they would dine fourteen or fifteen people, this would make their dinners come to about fivepence a piece. A real difficulty occurred then; it was to get away without joining the diners, and gaining actual experience, by partaking, of the work that had been done.

"I am always so unhappy when visitors don't see the end!" urged the Donna, with every grace of hospitality. "And the clergy upstairs, who will join us, will be quite unhappy too! We make but one meal of it, children and all, and it would be so nice if you could stay!"

It would have been nice, indisputably—for the guests—but to stop would have been intrusion, and so we said a good-bye. It was a shame, too, to baulk the bright little Miss Cousins, as she was proudly laying out knives and forks.

"See!" she said, "we have very fair things for using. And they are all presents to us, every one. We have cups, see, instead of glasses; and we use them as soup-plates, too, and find they answer just as well! The spoons are only pewter, not silver, but that doesn't matter, does it? Here is a bunch of chrysanthemums, see, sent us to make us look smart; and last week we had a present of a pair of fowls, and we were taught how to truss them and roast them, and we had them for dinner, afterwards, quite grand!"

Well, it was all done, and the kitchen left in its new aspect of refectory, with the saucepans all coming prosperously to fruition, and the odour good. But Parisina had to digest all the details when they had been laid before her, and to make a speech.

"Two fires, did you say? Oven, boiler, saucepans various, water at the tap's turn, and a sink?"

"Yes."

"And was the meat new, fresh bought, with the cost of a dinner only fivepence a head?"

"Yes. Exactly."

Parisina's eyes and hands, in her old way, went up. "And do you mean to say, *do* you mean to say," she cried, "that it is of any good to teach an artisan-woman, with a husband and six children (that makes eight, you know) to cook a dinner that shall cost her daily three-and-fourpence? And do you mean to say—do, *do* you mean to say—that an artisan-woman would have an oven and a boiler, and saucepans various, and all other utensils, with water at the tap's turn, and a useful sink? Go, please, everybody, to the cooking at a board-school, and see if authorities there have taken circumstances into consideration, and are wise enough to show how scraps can be metamorphosed into nutriment, and how the metamorphosing can be done with a kettle and a frying-pan, over the niggard surface of a triangular parlour or bed-room fire! Till then all this cooking parade and nonsense only makes me angry!"

Parisina's desire shall be attended to; and the result shown.

A LEGEND OF NIAGARA.

"It is very grand," said I.

"Savage!" responded my companion. "That's the right word for it, under its present aspect."

We were standing on the balcony surrounding the summit of the tower upon Terrapin Rock, looking down at Niagara, at midnight, in the month of September. I wrapped my cloak closer about me as a protection against the drenching spray, which pursued us even to the sheltering side of the tower, and acknowledged the truth of my friend's assertion.

The day had been stormy and wet, one of a week's continuous rain, and the sea of foaming breakers above the great curve of the Horse-shoe Fall (it was a curve then; now the ceaseless attrition of the waters has worn it into an irregular angle) was all swollen and turbid, as it hurried to the awful leap below. Plashing and pouring, surging, hissing, eddying and whirling, under the canopy of the black night, and low dank sky, the rapids dashed on to that inevitable edge, there to plunge—down—down—into an abyss of seething spray, from the vexed vortex of which upsoared a great shapeless cloud of mist, blotting out, almost entirely, the cataract, and discharging itself in rain over the forest-trees of Goat Island, and the darkly-glooming woods of the opposite Canadian shore. There was no moon visible. The roar of the cataract, its drum-like, hollow, reverberating thunder, all seemed increased, intensified. The rock and tower trembled beneath our feet. Gazing at the troubled sky, the sombre woods, the vast, vague cataract raging down into that dimly-seen hell of waters below, I instinctively recoiled, and again assented to my friend's proposition.

"It is savage," I said. "I could fancy we were the only white men on this continent—that civilisation had passed away, or we gone back a thousand years, as I look at it."

"Exactly! It's the true sentiment of the place. Our Margaret Fuller" (the speaker was an American), "when here, imagined painted Indians stealing behind her with uplifted tomahawks. There can be no doubt that Niagara is highly aboriginal."

"Only those lights contradict us," I answered, pointing to the twinkling illuminations of the Clifton House, on the Canadian shore.

"Yes, and pleasantly. I wish we were there, or back at the International. Let's be walking, if you have had enough of this watery horror. I prefer the smoke of a cigar to the midnight mists of Niagara."

I made some remark on the oddity of the phrase, but still lingered, enthralled by the savage beauty of the scene. My friend continued:

"The red-skins understood the feeling of which we speak, when they fancied that a victim was demanded yearly by the spirits of the cataract. Apropos of which belief I can tell you a tradition that has escaped both Schoolcraft and Longfellow. I learnt it from an old Ojibway in 1848, when I was prospecting for copper in the Lake Superior region, and it is not devoid of interest. Come along, and I'll repeat it for your benefit, but not in this very rheumatic locality."

I readily assented, and a quarter of an hour afterwards, seated in a room of the hotel, beside a blazing fire, and soothed by hot brandy toddies, together with the nicotian solace coveted by my companion, he related to me the following narrative; the stormy voice of the great cataract forming an appropriate accompaniment:

"Over three hundred years ago, and for ages immemorial before the white man had ever set his fatal foot in this country, all the inland region, from what is now Canada to North Carolina, and westwards from central Pennsylvania to Michigan, was peopled by the Iroquois nation; while the Algonquins, or Ojibways, occupied the coast of the Atlantic, and the extreme north and west, from Labrador even to the remote bounds of Oregon. These were the two great aboriginal races; all the minor tribes being included therein. Of their feuds and hereditary hatred there are innumerable traditions; but it is not my purpose to speak of such. Mine is only a story of individual passion, rivalry, and self-sacrifice, illustrative of the great humanising fact, that even in savage life there may occur deeds which equal in their involuntary heroism some of the most admired achievements of classic antiquity.

"The Iroquois were by far the more warlike and powerful of the two nations; their courage, ferocity, and cruelty rendered them victorious over all native antagonists. Among those who lived on the banks of the great Thunder Water, Niagara, were, prominent above all their fellow braves, two young warriors, known respectively as the Agile Panther and the Three Bears, and also, in virtue of the strict friendship which united them, as The Brothers, albeit no such blood relationship existed. The first owed his name to his extraordinary bodily activity and prowess on the war-path; he could run, row, swim, leap, and fight beyond all rivalry—better even than his sworn friend the Three Bears, who had earned his designation by the honourable achievement of killing that number of formidable grizzlies, the monstrous claws of which formed a triple collar round his neck. The Agile Panther could boast of no such decoration, but when his friend had been captured by the Mohawks, and was in imminent danger of torture and death, he alone had made a secret expedition for the purpose of rescuing him, and accomplished it by slaying five of the hostile tribe in single combat. His wigwam had more scalps in it than that of any other warrior of the Niagara Iroquois.

"Great was the friendship between The

Brothers. Together they traversed the dense forest covering all the western or Canadian banks of the Thunder Water, hunting the elk, the bear, and the bison, the roe and the reindeer; together they trapped the fox, the rabbit, and the beaver; together they fished in the sah-sah-jé-wun or rapids, or the great lakes Erie and Ontario; side by side they lay, in winter, on the frozen surface of the water, their heads covered with skins, spearing the salmon through the air-holes with their barbed aishkuns. And together they bound snowshoes on their feet, and danced or ran races, emulating the flight of the shaw-shaw, or swallow, in swiftness, or engaged in ball-play on the ice. Their words were the same at the council-fire; they lived in the same wigwam, and were inseparable.

"What could occasion division and estrangement—nay, strife and hatred—between such friends? The old, old cause of contention—a woman. They loved the same maiden, and henceforth were rivals and enemies.

"There came from the lodges of the Onondagas a young squaw, all of whose relations had been killed by the Algonquins, who had spared not even the women and children. No drop of her blood ran in the veins of any living creature. She was slender and shapely as the willow, with great dark eyes, and black, flowing hair, fine and silky as the golden tresses of the maize or Indian corn. She had a sweet, low voice, musical as a bird's singing, or the rippling of the streamlet in the nights of summer, or the moon of strawberries. She was also gentle and helpful, swift of foot and nimble of fingers, and skilled in all the accomplishments of women. She could weave mats of flags and rushes; dress and whiten skins for tents and raiment; string in the most beautiful patterns the beads of shell forming wampum; make sugar from the maple; dry, and pound into pemmican, the flesh of the deer or buffalo; prepare and cook cakes of maize or rice, and other Indian dainties. From a rather terrified expression of countenance which she had on first joining the tribe, in consequence of the dismal massacre of her people, she was called the Startled Fawn.

"I have said that the two young warriors loved the timid beauty of the Onondagas. They had been indifferent to the handsomest of all the young squaws of their own tribe; but the charms of the lovely stranger penetrated their hearts. They vied with each other in bringing to the tent of the family, in which she was an adopted daughter, presents of game, and birds, and fish. Her smile was to them as sunshine; her sorrow as a cloud at noon; but they were no longer friends. The past was as a thing which had not been. They lived in separate wigwams, nor was the grass between them ever worn by the tread of each other's mocassins. They hunted apart and alone. When they chanced to meet, it was with lowering and averted looks, and soon with glances of jealousy, hatred, and defiance. Only in irony could they be mentioned by their former name of The Brothers.

"Of her two suitors, the Startled Fawn preferred the tall and handsome Three Bears before the sterner, though more redoubtable, Agile Panther; he had not the fluent tongue which, even in savage life, wins the favour of woman. He was a battle-scarred warrior, eloquent only at the council-fire. The Three Bears, on the other hand, needed but the inspiration of the most humanising of passions to become all that an Indian maiden could desire. Very pleasant to her was the sound of his voice; but the fervid regards of the Agile Panther frightened her. Wherefore, he became savagely, terribly jealous, and revolved evil thoughts in his mind against his late friend and companion.

"There would, undoubtedly, have occurred some bloody struggle between them, if circumstances had not induced another catastrophe. During the rivalry of the two warriors, and even before, various misfortunes had befallen the Niagara Iroquois. Their scanty crops of maize were devoured by locusts and grasshoppers; the summer, also, brought fever and ague; and the winters were of unprecedented length and severity, putting a stop to hunting. With the customary improvidence of savage life, they had neglected to secure a supply of fish, albeit the waters of the lakes so teemed with them at certain seasons that they could be ladled out with bowls; it was too much trouble to salt or smoke them. In consequence, the people were half-starved, and compelled to live on berries before the long-looked-for advent of spring. Add to these calamities, the tribe was defeated again and again on the war-path, against their neighbours and enemies the Senecas, who lived on the other shore of the great cataract.

"Such misfortunes could not happen without a supernatural origin, in the opinion of the Niagara Iroquois. It was evident to all of them, and especially to the medicine-men, magicians, and prophets, that the Thunder-God and his seven giant sons, who dwelt in the vast caverns under the falls, and whose awful voices swelled and deepened their roar, were angry. No human victim had propitiated them by an involuntary death for at least three years. Darkly the old braves discoursed together, suspecting there must be a doomed man in the tribe, and proposing to cast lots until he should be discovered, and then given to appease the just wrath of the spirits of the cataract. All eyes were fixed on the Black Cloud, all ears were open to listen to his counsel.

"He was a very old warrior, who had outlived four generations, and become the greatest magician, prophet, and medicine-man among the Niagara Iroquois. What hair he had was white as the snow-drift or the foam of the cataract; and his eyes burned like those of a hunted wolf in a dark cavern. His people held him in the utmost dread and reverence. It was believed that he knew the language of the animals, and had the power of transforming himself into the shape of any beast, or bird, or fish; and that under such metamorphoses, he had visited the island which divides the two falls, explored its mysterious woods and gloomy recesses, and discovered a wondrous cave, the birthplace of the winds, and the home of the rainbows, where he had conversed with the nee-ba-naw-baigs, or water-spirits, if not with the Thunder-God and his seven giant sons. It was known that he had journeyed far to the north, to the land of the White Rabbit, and sailed on the Big Sea Water, or Lake Superior, and beheld all the marvels of that region—the Striped Rocks, painted in beautiful vertical colours by the long-haired Memogovissioos, or marine men, who haunt those intricate wave-worn caves and translucent waters—the Thunder Cape, and the island where dwelt the great serpent, the cast-off skin of which would render any warrior invulnerable. He lived in a solitary wigwam, some little distance above the Horse-shoe Fall, and had bewitched the water, so that fire would flash out of it whenever he chose. The spot retains that peculiarity to this day, and is known as the Burning Springs.

"The Black Cloud was also the great-great-uncle of the Agile Panther, his only surviving relative. Consulted as to the supposed necessity for sacrificing a victim to the spirits of the cataract, he summoned all the other magicians, medicine-men, and prophets, to a great pow-wow or council, at a sacred lodge, built especially for the purpose in the depth of the forest. There they performed their incantations, beat their drums, and shook their rattles and medicine-pouches, danced and chanted, and called upon their familiar spirits, and at the end of three days announced the result. The Thunder-God demanded the immolation of one of the best and bravest warriors of the tribe. They had practised their arts of divination to decide whom, and the choice fell upon the Three Bears.

"It was difficult not to believe that the relationship of the Agile Panther to his formidable uncle, twice-removed, had saved him from the fatal selection, to which, as the most renowned brave among the Niagara Iroquois, he was obviously liable, instead of his late friend. It was as impossible not to suspect that the crafty Black Cloud had controlled the choice, for he loved nothing human but his young kinsman, and notoriously shared his enmity towards his successful rival. That warrior, too, had once personally offended him. But whatever might be thought or whispered, there was no gainsaying such a decision. The boldest warriors shrank from disputing the sentence and incurring the wrath, both of the Thunder-God and of the exponents of his will, headed by the vindictive Black Cloud.

"We may fancy the grief, the despair of the Startled Fawn, and how utterly unavailing all she could say or do would prove in such an emergency. Women are but of small account in savage life, and a girl, an orphan, and adopted stranger—what was she that she should bias the judgment of warriors and hoary sages? Let her forget her lover and take another—follow the Agile Panther to his wigwam, and become the mother of as brave children. For the Three Bears, Indian fortitude, and his pride as a warrior, forbade complaint or remonstrance. The selection was honourable to him. The spirits of the cataract had chosen him, above all others, as the most precious offering to satisfy their grim requirements; and he was, so to speak, both the expiatory and propitiatory sacrifice of his tribe. His death would exonerate others, and reverse the ill-fortune of the people. There was nothing for it but to meet his fate like a warrior and an Iroquois.

"Tradition tells us but little of the Agile Panther at this crisis, except that, after an interview with the Startled Fawn, he sought the woods, and shunned all company. Who shall say what was passing in his mind? what struggles he underwent between the temptation to avail himself of an opportunity involving at once the gratification of the two passions of desire and jealousy, so potent in an untutored savage, and an instinctive conviction of their inherent baseness, prompting him to self-conquest and renunciation? thereby rising to a far higher plane of action, but one not unprecedented in Indian life. His pride, too, must have suggested that if the proposed sacrifice took place, it would bestow upon the Three Bears a posthumous immortality in the songs of his tribe, while he himself would forfeit his reputation as its bravest warrior. But his thoughts and feelings can only be conjectured from his subsequent behaviour. The good and evil angels within him, as in all of us, strove together; and we shall see which won the victory.

"Two days after the decision, all the Niagara Iroquois assembled on the banks of the rapids immediately above the greater cataract, to witness the sacrifice. It was a beautiful day in spring, at sunrise. Thousands of birds soared and sang from the unbroken virgin wilderness, the rich grassy banks, and the inaccessible woods of Goat Island, or skimmed with sportive wing the surface of the waters, braving even the very edge of the falls; the rapids rushed, and rippled, and shone like molten gold; and the great cataract flowed on in its wonted aspect of beauty, and majesty, and terror; the rainbow arching its abysses and the cloud mantling them, while the accustomed thunder of its multitudinous voices supplied the only appropriate bass to its tremendous music. To the ears of the tribe it was the giant god, and his inexorable brood, roaring for their prey.

"Moored to the bank by a strong cord, made of the bark of the elm-tree boiled, and dancing in the rapids, was a birch-bark canoe, in which the victim was to accomplish his short and fatal voyage. It contained a supply of food sufficient for four days' journey, and fuel for four night encampments, those being the supposed necessaries for a spirit's passage to the happy hunting-grounds; together with the warrior's weapons—his stone axe or tomahawk, his spear with its head of sharpened flint, and his tufted bow, and quiver full of brilliantly-feathered arrows. Adjacent, in a semicircle, sat the medicine-men, magicians, and prophets, with their drums and rattles, ready to raise the death-wail, when the Black Cloud severed the rope, and committed the occupant of the canoe to his fate.

"The Three Bears came forth from his wigwam radiant, triumphant, for in accordance with Indian ethics, he believed that the least manifestation of fear or uneasiness would forfeit the favour of the gods, and imperil his future happiness. He was clad in the gayest of Iroquois finery, wearing a hunting-shirt of embroidered doe-skin, fringed with ermine and ornamented with beads and the parti-coloured quills of the porcupine, and belted with gaudy wampum. On his head was a crest of eagle's feathers, and round his neck his triple collar of bears' claws. His leggings were decorated with the hair of scalps, shells and hedgehog-quills, and his moccasins of buckskin, trimmed with marten's fur, glittered with beads like the dew on the grass of the meadow. His face was also brilliantly painted with stripes of blue, and red, and yellow, as when upon the war-path, or adorned for some savage festival. The sages and warriors beheld him in grave silence, but the squaws and younger braves could not repress a cry of mingled admiration and sympathy. It was not swelled by the voice of lamentation from the Startled Fawn. Grief-stricken and prostrate, she secluded herself in her wigwam.

"With a look of pride and lofty confidence the Three Bears advanced towards the bank. Suddenly there arose a confused murmur and movement on the outer edge of the throng; it parted and made way for the Agile Panther, also in the full costume of a warrior. His face, the cynosure of all eyes, blazed with the enthusiasm of a great resolution. He uttered not a word, until he stood by the side of his former friend, and then turned, and confronted the crowd.

"'Iroquois!' he said, raising his arm aloft; 'warriors! this task is mine. I claim it as my right. The Great Spirit has spoken to me by the voice of the thunder in the wilderness, bidding me come to him and alone, that his face may be brightened towards you and his anger averted. Let my brother return to his wigwam, and to her who weeps for him. The time will come when their children will speak of the Agile Panther. Who is there to mourn for him? Not one!'

"But there was a great clamour at this, the Black Cloud interposing with the voice of authority, the Three Bears insisting on his own prerogative of self-sacrifice, and the rest crying, some one thing, some another. The contention did not last long. As though simultaneously inspired with the same purpose, the two warriors made a sudden rush for the canoe, coming into collision on the very brink of the rapids. There they closed in a desperate struggle, seemingly of mortal hatred rather than of generous and heroic resolution, the one to immolate himself for the sake of the other. Terrible were their throes and convulsions, but the Three Bears was no match for his antagonist: he was thrown, lifted by sheer strength aloft, and hurled backwards among the excited crowd. A triumphant war-whoop—a bound worthy of the animal from which he derived his name—and the Agile Panther was in the fatal bark, had swung the ready axe and severed the rope, and was gliding with horrible velocity towards the fall.

"He went over not like the craven victim of some wretched accident, lying prone and with muffled head, but erect, triumphant, victorious. And if it be true that whosoever shall lose his life for another's sake shall save it, who shall doubt that he did well, Indian and savage though he was?"

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LVIII.

The big room at the Blue Bell was full. It was a room associated in the minds of most of the people present with occasions of festivity or entertainment. The Archery Club balls were held in it. It was used for the exhibitions of any travelling conjurer, lecturer, or musician, whose evil fate brought him to Whitford. Once a strolling company of players had performed there before some fifteen persons, and several dozen cane-bottomed chairs. There were the tarnished candelabra stuck in the walls, the little gallery up aloft where the fiddlers sat on ball nights, and the big looking-glass at one end of the room, muffled with yellow muslin, and surmounted by a dusty garland of paper flowers. Now the wintry daylight coming through the uncurtained windows, made all these things look chill, ghastly, and forlorn. People who had thought the Blue Bell Assembly Room a cheerful place enough under the bright illumination of wax candles, now shivered, and whispered to each other how dreary it was.

The coroner's jury had been out to Duckwell Farm to view the body, and to look at the exact spot on the bank where it had been landed from the boat, and to stare at the willow stump to which it had been found fastened by the clothes. And they had returned to the Blue Bell inn, to complete the inquiry into the causes of the death of Castalia Errington. A great many witnesses had already been examined. Their testimony went to show that the deceased lady's behaviour of late had been very strange, capricious, and unreasonable. Almost every one of the witnesses, including the servants at Ivy Lodge, confessed that they had heard rumours of young Mrs. Errington being "not right in her mind." They had observed an increasing depression of spirits in her of late. Obadiah Gibbs's evidence was the strongest of all, and his revelations created a great sensation. He described his last interview with Castalia at the post-office, and left the impression on all his hearers which was honestly his own; namely, that on Castalia, and on her alone, rested the onus of the irregularities and robberies of money-letters at Whitford. He did his best to spare her memory. He sincerely thought her irresponsible for her actions. But the facts, as he saw and represented them, admitted of but one conclusion being come to.

Algernon Errington's appearance in the room elicited a low murmur of sympathy from the spectators. His manner of giving his evidence was perfect, and nothing could have been better in keeping with the circumstances of his painful position, than the subdued, yet quiet tones of his voice, and the white, strained look of his face, which revealed rather the effect of a great shock to the nerves than a deep wound in his heart. Of course he could not be expected to grieve as a husband would grieve who had lost a dearly-loved and loving wife, but their having been on somewhat bad terms, and Castalia's notorious jealousy and bad temper, made the manner of her death all the more terrible. Poor young man! He was dreadfully cut up, one could see that. But he made no pretences, put on no affectations of woe. He was so simple and quiet! In a word, he was credited with feeling precisely what he ought to have felt.

His statement added scarcely any new fact to those already known. He had not seen his wife alive, since he parted from her when he started for London, to visit Lord Seely, who was ill. He corroborated his servants' testimony to the facts that Castalia had wandered out on to Whitmeadow about nine o'clock in the morning; that he had been made uneasy by her strange absence, and that he had gone himself to seek her, but without success. In reply to some questions by a juryman, as to whether he had gone to London solely because of Lord Seely's illness, he answered, with a look of quiet sadness, that that had not been his sole reason. There were private matters to be spoken of between himself and his wife's uncle—matters which admitted of no delay. Could he not have written them? No; he did not feel at liberty to write them. They concerned his wife. He had mentioned to Lord Seely his fears that her mind was giving way, as Lord Seely would be able to affirm. A letter found in the pocket of the deceased woman's gown was produced and read. It had become partly illegible from immersion in the water, but the greater portion of it could be made out. It was from Lord Seely, and referred to a painful conversation he had had with his niece's husband about herself. It was a kind letter, but written evidently in much agitation and pain of mind. The writer exhorted and even implored his niece to confide fully in him, for her own sake, as well as that of her family; and promised that he would help and support her under all circumstances, if she would but tell him the truth unreservedly.

Nothing could have been better for Algernon's case than that letter. Instead of being the cause of his disgrace and exposure, it was obviously the means of confirming every one of his statements, implied as well as expressed. It showed clearly enough—first, that Algernon had given Lord Seely to understand that his wife laboured under grave suspicions of having stolen money-letters from the Whitford Post-office; secondly, that he (Algernon) believed those suspicions to be well founded; thirdly, that symptoms of mental aberration, which had recently manifested themselves in Castalia, were at once the explanation of, and the excuse for, her conduct. This letter, which, if Castalia were alive to speak for herself, would have been like a brand on her husband's forehead for life, was now a most valuable testimony in his favour.

Algernon's hard and unrelenting mood towards his dead wife grew still harder and more unrelenting as he listened to this letter, and remembered that Castalia had threatened him with exposure, and had resolved not to spare him. Nothing in the world but her death could have saved him from ruin. Even supposing that she could have been cajoled into promising to comply with his directions, she would not have been able to do so. She was so stupidly literal in her statements. A direct lie would have embarrassed her. And then, at the first jealous fit which might have seized her, he would have been at her mercy. Lord Seely's letter showed a strong feeling of irritation—almost of hostility—against Algernon. It might not be recognisable by the audience at the inquest, but Algernon recognised it completely, and felt a distinct sense of triumph in the impotence of Lord Seely to harm him, or to wriggle away from under his heel. Algernon was master of the position. He appeared before the world in the light of a victim to his alliance with the Seelys. There could be no further talk on their part of condescension, or honour conferred. He and his mother had lived their lives as persons of gentle blood and unblemished reputation, until the Honourable Castalia Kilfinane brought disgrace and misery into their home. In making these reflections Algernon was not, of course, considering the inward truth of facts, but their outward semblances. It made no difference to his indignation against the "pompous little ass" who had treated him with hauteur, nor to his satisfaction in humbling the "pompous little ass," that if all the secret circumstances hidden and silenced for ever under the cold white shroud that covered his dead wife could be revealed before the eyes of all men, Lord Seely would have the right to detest and despise him. Lord Seely had not treated him as he ought. He was firmly persuaded of that. And as he measured Lord Seely's duty towards him by the extent of all he desired and expected of Lord Seely, it will be seen how far short the latter had fallen of Algernon's standard.

The Seth Maxfields gave their testimony as to how the deceased body had been carried into their house; how they had tried all means to revive her; and how every effort had been in vain, and she had never moved nor breathed again. The two men who had rescued the body from the water, and the carpenter who had brought the news to Ivy Lodge, repeated their story, and corroborated all that the Maxfields had said. There only remained to be heard the important testimony of David Powell. He had been so ill that it was feared at one time that the inquest must be adjourned until he should be able to give his evidence. But he declared that he would come and speak before the jury; that he should be strengthened to do so when the moment arrived; and had opposed a fixed silence to all the representations and remonstrances of the doctor. On the morning of the inquest he arose and dressed himself before Mrs. Thimbleby was up, albeit she was no sluggard in the morning. He had gone out, while it was still dark, into the raw foggy atmosphere of Whit-meadow, and had wandered there for a long time. On returning to the widow Thimbleby's house, he had seated himself opposite to the blazing fire in the kitchen, staring at it, and muttering to himself like a man in a feverish dream.

Nevertheless, when the due time arrived, he entered the room at the Blue Bell to give his evidence, with a quiet steady gait. His appearance there produced a profound impression.

A stranger contrast than he presented to the Whitford burghers by whom he was surrounded could scarcely be imagined. Not only were his bodily shape and colouring different from theirs, but the expression of his face was almost unearthly. There was some subtle contradiction between the expression of David Powell's sorrow-laden eyes and brow, and that of the mouth, with its tightly-closed lips drawn back at the corners with what on ordinary faces would have been a smile. But on his face being coupled with a singular pinched look of the nostrils and a strained tightness of the upper lip, it became something which troubled the beholder with a sense of inexplicable pain—almost terror.

As he advanced along the room, there was a hush of attentive expectation, during which Dr. Evans, the coroner, curiously examined the Methodist preacher with grave professional eyes. After a few preliminary questions, to which Powell gave brief, clear answers, he said, "I have been brought hither to testify in this matter. I am an instrument in the hands of the great and terrible God. He works not as men work. In his hand all tools are alike."

"What can you tell us of the death of this unfortunate lady, Mr. Powell?" asked the coroner, quietly. "You were the first to see her struggling in the water, were you not? And you made a gallant effort to save her."

"She struggled but little. She went to her death as a lamb to the slaughter; nay, as a victim who desires to die."

Powell spoke in a low but distinct voice; broken and harsh, indeed, compared with what it once was, but still with a soft tremulous note in it now and then, that seemed to stir deep fibres of feeling in the hearts of those who heard him. In such a tone it was that he uttered the words, "as a victim who desires to die." And tears sprang into the eyes of many from sheer emotional sympathy with the sound of his voice.

"You are of opinion, then, Mr. Powell," said the coroner, "that the deceased wilfully put an end to her own life."

"You think that she was not in a state of mind to be responsible for her actions?"

"She was murdered!" said Powell, in a distinct, grating tone, which was audible in every corner of the crowded room.

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &C. &C.

BOOK II. CHAPTER IV. AUDREY'S NARRATIVE. OUR MOTHER'S KIN.

"I WAS unusually ready and willing to get up on the following morning, for excitement, novelty, anything interesting or out of the way, was of very rare occurrence at the Dingle House, and my head was not yet sufficiently filled with my own immediate concerns to admit of my being indifferent on the subject of the letter from Australia. I bustled about to get breakfast ready, and have everything comfortable, I supplied the teapot with a more than ordinarily liberal hand, and I glanced frequently at the clock on the mantel-piece, convinced that my father and Griffith were later than was their custom in making their appearance.

"At length—and at precisely their usual time—they came into the room together, and I perceived at once that they had already been discussing the subject which was uppermost in my thoughts. This vexed me a little; it put me at a disadvantage. My father was not easy to question, and he disliked making long explanations; he would not tell me, all over again, things he had previously told to Griffith. I should get them all out of Griffith though, that was a satisfaction, and it was the only one I had for some time, for my father ate his breakfast with great deliberation, and read his letters—of course there was a report from some society or other, about a plant with a long name, or an animal previously unheard of, to protract the process—and Griffith resorted to the morning newspaper, though I could see that he was covertly enjoying my impatience all the time. I should have liked to ask out boldly, 'What is the Australian letter about?' but I did not venture to do so. Of course I was grown up, and it was very silly to hesitate about such a thing, but somehow or other I never felt, at that time, quite grown up, when my father was in question.

"At last my father concluded the reading of his letters, put them into the pocket of his dressing-gown, took off his spectacles, and addressed me.

"'Audrey, my dear,' he said; 'did I ever tell you anything about your mother's brother, Mr. Pemberton?'

"'Not that I remember, papa, beyond the fact that poor mamma had a brother, out in Australia.'

"'No, I suppose I did not. After all, there was not much more to tell, for it has not hitherto seemed probable that you and he would have any acquaintance with each other, or be brought in contact in any way. But I have had a letter, as Griffith has already told you, from your uncle, and it contains an announcement which is likely to have a considerable influence on your future life.'

"'On mine, papa! And how?'

"'I will tell you, my dear, in a very few words, and then Griffith can repeat to you as much of the family history as I have told him. Your uncle, Mr. John Pemberton, is coming home from Australia—from Sydney—with his second wife, and his daughter (she is his first wife's child), and he wishes to form family relations of the pleasantest kind with us, especially between your unknown cousin and yourself.'

"'Oh, papa! how delightful! Is she my age, and what is her name? Why did I never know anything about her all this time?'

"'You knew as much as I did, my dear, or nearly so. I had not heard anything of Pemberton for many years, and had nearly forgotten that he had a daughter. Her name is Ida, and I think she is a little older than you; somewhere between Griffith and yourself, I fancy.'

"'Ida! It is a beautiful name! I wonder is she very pretty? And are they coming to live here, papa?'

"'Here? At the Dingle House, do you mean?' An amused smile crossed my father's face.

"'Yes.' I spoke rather apprehensively. A new cousin, with a beautiful name, must be on the spot to be a realisable good to me. 'You said their coming would make a difference to me.'

"'So it will, but not exactly in that way. The Dingle House is all very well for us, my dear; but I fancy it would be a very dingy and dismal abode in your uncle's eyes, for he is a rich man, and your cousin Ida will be an heiress. He makes that plain in his letter, and I should think the last thing in his mind would be to settle down in a little place like Wrottesley, or its neighbourhood.'

"I had not leisure just then to express, or indeed to feel, the extent of the astonishment with which my father's depreciatory manner of speaking of Wrottesley inspired me. It had never occurred to me that the place could be regarded in that light, and that my father could possibly be a silent sufferer from a restricted and circumscribed sphere. The impression of failure which his general aspect had produced upon me, ever since I had been old enough to understand it, had not extended to such lengths as that, and it was quite a revelation to me that it was deepened and quickened by the sudden glimpse of a prosperous and successful life, thus flashed upon him by the receipt of my uncle's letter.

"Not that there was the least bitterness in his tone, or the faintest touch of envy; these evil things had no place in my father's mind; but that it just enlightened me a little concerning his views of his own life and its missed possibilities. I knew that he had commenced his career with a fair amount of wealth, and an assured station to help him. I knew nothing of my uncle's beginnings, but it was easy to divine that he had had neither; otherwise we should have heard of him long ere this, and not from the other side of the world.

"'No, no,' continued my father; 'Pemberton means something very different from Wrottesley. What should you say to London, Audrey?'

"'London, papa!' I exclaimed in delight, which to the young ladies of the present would seem ridiculous; for how could they take in the idea of life which had not in it at least an occasional 'run up to town;' a pleasure which had never been known to mine? 'Do you mean that my uncle intends to live in London, and that I am to be there with my cousin sometimes? Is that in the letter?'

"'That and a great deal more is in the letter, my dear; and I am heartily glad of it, for your sake. Your uncle is a fine fellow, Audrey, though he and I did not get on very well together long ago, which was much more my fault than his. And his return to England as the possessor of a good fortune by which he desires his sister's children to benefit, is a very lucky event in your lives. Indeed'—here my father smiled in a wistful fashion, which had something sad in it to my mind—'it looks as if he were coming back to prove his case against me by the most cogent of all human arguments—success; and, at the same time, to mitigate some of the evil results of my mistakes.'

"This was really my father talking to me with a distinct remembrance that I was 'grown up,' but somehow it did not please me; perhaps because I was sufficiently grown up to have an insight into the pain that was under his guarded words. Griffith looked up quickly, and said:

"'My dear father, neither Audrey nor I have anything to complain of in what you call your mistakes, and you must not point the moral of Mr. Pemberton's success in that way, if we are to be glad of it.'

"My heart echoed Griffith's words, but I did not venture to speak. My father rose, and began to pace the room with his hands behind his back. There was a short pause.

"'Well, well,' he began again, 'it is of no use to try back on the past, especially when one has not been so wise as one would believe oneself, and wish to be believed.' Then, lifting and depressing his shoulders as though he threw off a great weight, he added: 'You will be in a very different position from that which has hitherto been yours, should your uncle carry out the generous intentions he has formed and which he hints at in his letter.'

"'Oh, papa,' I exclaimed, heedlessly; 'perhaps, after all, Griffith need not remain in the bank!'

"'Hush, hush, Audrey,' said Griffith; 'you are talking nonsense. It cannot make any difference in that respect. Mr. Pemberton means to be very kind, no doubt, and to have you to stay with his daughter, and share all her pleasures, but he cannot propose to alter the plan of our lives; and it could not be, even if he did propose to do so. We must not calculate on anything, beyond the vague good of having new relatives and a fresh interest in life, until Mr. Pemberton has arrived, and we know what sort of person he really is.'

"'You are right, Griffith,' said my father, in a tone of hearty commendation, 'and wise. It is useless to speculate upon the results of this strange renewal of intercourse between Pemberton and myself, after a separation of so many years; and to do so on the large scale into which Audrey's notions have already rushed, might, perhaps, lead to disappointment. But she may know, as you know already, that your uncle is disposed to be kind and generous to you, and to make the old ties quite whole again. I should give you his letter to read—both of you, I mean—only that a portion of it is strictly confidential, and must be seen by no eyes but mine. However, I may tell you that your uncle warns me to expect a further and more important communication from him by the next mail.'

"'He is evidently a businesslike personage,' said Griffith.

"'Evidently. I am to receive papers and letters next month, at the end of which, or the beginning of the month after, he intends to sail for England; the date of their departure from the colony is to depend on the choice of a ship. He purposes to come here in the first instance.'

"'Here!' I exclaimed. 'I thought you said the Dingle House would not do for them?'

"'Nor will it. Just think for a minute, my dear, and you will see we should not have room for them. But they can divide the party. Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton can go to the Castle Hotel, and you can have your new cousin here. But, considering the event in prospect is several months off, don't you think we are premature in discussing its details? Your imagination will have plenty of food for some time to come, Audrey, and you may exercise it safely in the direction of your cousin's good looks, for Pemberton tells me his daughter is remarkably like her mother.'

"'Did you know her?' I asked, eagerly.

"'Yes; long, long ago, in the early days of their marriage, which were the early days of my own. She was exceedingly lovely. Tall, slender, brown-eyed, dark-haired, with a very pretty figure, pleasant manners, and a charming voice.'

"'What a description! If our new cousin be really like such a woman, she will be a wonder among girls.'

"'And a decided novelty at Wrottesley,' said Griffith, lightly, and with a touch of scepticism in his tone which somewhat provoked me, for why should not the unknown Ida be everything her father's account of her implied? Griffith was all but faultless in my eyes, to be sure; but still, he did occasionally lack ideality, and he had an unaccountable tendency to slight, or, at least, to abstain from interest in girls in general, which irritated me to the extent of making me wish that he might fall in love, and so get cured of that provoking way of his. Of course, I did not mean seriously; I should have felt all the jealous annoyance of an only sister in such a case as that, unless, indeed, I had happened to have an exceedingly intimate friend, and Griffith had exhibited a disposition to fall in love with her—but just a little, enough to make him regard all women with different eyes, though not enough to render him unhappy, or to sever him from me.

"'There are pretty girls at Wrottesley, too,' I answered, rather hotly, 'though you may not think them worth looking at.'

"Griffith was a little surprised at my petulance, and he misunderstood its sense.

"'I beg your pardon,' he said, laughingly. 'I made a very rude speech; but, indeed, I did not mean it. Look in the glass, and you'll know I couldn't.'

"'What nonsense, Griffith! As if I imagined for a moment you were thinking about me.' But I did glance at the mirror over the chimney-piece for all that; and I made a mental note that one's brothers never knew what one was like.

"My father, who had taken no notice of our little squabble, now called Griffith to him, and I left the room as usual for the daily colloquy with Mrs. Frost, in which she suggested and I acquiesced, which I called by the dignified term of my 'housekeeping.' This time I had news to give her. My father had not been beforehand with me, as he had been on the occasion when Griffith's destiny was arranged. It fell to my lot to tell Frosty the wonderful news about the unknown relatives who were coming to us over the sea, and the grand prospects that might arise for me out of the event. The communication was received with all the interest I expected, and with rather inconvenient curiosity, for Mrs. Frost immediately asked me a number of questions which I was not in a condition to answer, and which rendered me impatient for a talk with Griffith. That could not be had until the evening, and I had the intervening hours for the weaving of romances, in which my fair unknown cousin played a distinguished part.

"I speculated much concerning my uncle and his daughter. Of Mrs. Pemberton I did not make much account, which proved my ignorance of life and its ways. Had I had a little more experience, I should have known how all-important she must be in the future occurrences on which I was speculating; how completely it would probably rest with her, either to give my visions some measure of fulfilment, or to disperse them in black disappointment. But my father had barely mentioned her; I had asked him no questions about her, and, in her dubious capacity of second wife and stepmother, she did not vehemently interest me. There is generally something antagonistic in the minds of girls to those combined conditions; and in mine it was of a sturdy description, for I remembered very well the apprehension and indignation with which my small breast had been filled when, years ago, certain hints that my father might possibly marry again, and that I might find myself in the power of a stepmother, had come to my hearing, and made me exceedingly miserable. To the best of my belief, no such notion had ever presented itself to my father's mind, and his opportunities of forming such a design were of the most limited description; but it was quite enough to torment me that a piece of gossip on the subject should reach me—quite enough to inspire me with a feeling of aversion towards any woman who was a man's second wife, and his daughter's stepmother. If I had troubled my head—which it would have been wise of me to have done—with the idea of Mrs. Pemberton at all, I should simply have made up my mind that she must be detestable, and probably strengthened my fancy picture by a combination of Ida and myself against the common and natural enemy. As it was, I strangely overlooked her.

"When Griffith came home that evening, I began upon the subject of Mr. Pemberton's letter.

"Griffith was as ready to talk about the new prospect which had come to interrupt the monotony of our lives as I could desire, and we had a long confabulation as we walked about on the lawn together that same afternoon. My father was busy all day writing—I concluded he was replying to Mr. Pemberton's letter—and I saw hardly anything of him.

"Of course there was a great deal to be imagined and conjectured about our unknown relatives; but the sum of information which Griffith had to impart was not important. He had been told by our father that Mr. Pemberton had gone out to the colonies very early in life, taking with him a young wife, and a sum of money which was moderate for those days, but in these would be regarded as quite insignificant. The brothers-in-law had not been very good friends. My mother's family, though eminently respectable, had none of the territorial importance which, at that time, attached to the Dwarrises, and—how ludicrously impossible such a thing seemed to me and Griffith now!—my father was supposed to have despised John Pemberton's notions, and to have thrown cold water on the emigration scheme. After all these years he explained to Griffith that he had never meant anything of the kind, but had been himself a sanguine and unfortunate speculator, dealing, unhappily for us all, with larger means than those at John Pemberton's disposal, and annoyed because his wife's brother, a younger man than himself, would not adopt his dashing ideas of what might be done at home, but persisted in banishing himself. Distance, time, and the various events of their respective lives combined to part the two families; and, no doubt, the continuous disaster of my father's pecuniary affairs, and his early-reached, easily-submitted-to sense of failure came in aid of the severance. The game of life had played itself out variously in the hands of the brothers-in-law. My father had lost, while John Pemberton had steadily won.

"'And now,' said Griffith, 'here's our uncle coming home, like the oncle d'Amérique of the French story, with bags of gold, and a fairy princess for a daughter; and there's my father, who was rather a big swell in the old times, with all his grandeur gone, and nothing left but encumbrances.'

"'Oh, Griffith! As if you were not better than bags of gold or fairy princesses to papa. And then, how much better our father has been to us than our uncle to his poor child. There's no second wife in our house!'

"'No,' said my brother, thoughtfully; 'but I don't think, by what my father says, my uncle did Ida any harm by marrying again. I believe my uncle's letter mentions Mrs. Pemberton as being a devoted mother to his girl.'

"'My dear boy,' said I, with the sarcastic dignity of superior intelligence, 'what else do you suppose he would say? Of course he would be anxious to make papa think as well as possible of Mrs. Pemberton.'

"I allowed that branch of the subject to drop then, resignedly admitting to myself that, superior as Griffith was to other people, there were just a few subjects on which he did not feel as strongly as I could wish.

"Our uncle, it appeared, recollected our names, and many of the anecdotes of our childhood, which his sister had told him in her letters; for a desultory sort of correspondence had been kept up until the death of our mother, and Ida was represented as looking forward with pleasure to the prospect of making our acquaintance. It would all be very pleasant when it should come to pass, and it would be especially amusing for us to draw mental pictures of this unknown relative, and to compare them, on her arrival, with the reality. I don't think either of us took a genuine interest in the notion of Mr. Pemberton, or attempted to idealise him.

"Then there was London to think about. I had never even seen the streets and the shops of that enchanted city; 'trips' did not consort with my father's means, or enter into his ideas; and I could not remember his having gone up to London himself more than two or three times since my childhood, when his return from a short excursion of the kind was signalised by his bringing me back a large wax doll, with movable eyes and very spiral ringlets. I was to go to London with these unknown relatives, and 'to share Ida's home there;' such, reported by Griffith, were my uncle's words. They were enough to set a steadier head than mine on seeing visions and dreaming dreams, even without the aid of Miss Minnie Kellett's sympathetic comment upon them, which, I need hardly say, I sought without delay. Indeed, I had just then one or two other matters of importance, whereupon I wished to confer with my not very wise confidante; and though the news from Sydney was doubtless of greater magnitude than the other topics, it was less urgent. The arrival in England of my unknown relatives, with all the contingent advantages and pleasures comprised in that arrival, would keep as a subject of discussion; but I was not disposed to let the pleasure of telling Miss Minnie all about my first grown-up dinner-party—which was also the occasion of the first appearance at Wrottesley of any member of Lady Olive Despard's family, in the person of her brother, Lord Barr—be deferred until the zest of it should have gone off. And then, I had a not unnatural curiosity to learn some of those particulars about the recently-acquired inmate (Mrs. Kellett's lodgers were always called 'inmates' by her and her daughter), which I knew, by old experience, she would be equally willing to impart.

"Miss Minnie Kellett was no longer officially attached to the Dingle House in the capacity of my governess. Was I not grown up? Had I not finished my education?—I should be sorry to be obliged to give a strict account of what it amounted to—and started in life as a candidate for all its possibilities? There was, however, one branch of study for which I really cared, and in which Miss Minnie was an efficient instructress—it was music. I think she had mainly learnt by dint of teaching, and she continued to give me lessons, and to play duets with me, though the grammar, dictionary, history, and handbook era had reached its close.

"What a thoroughly delightful gossip we had that day! It reached to the full the feminine ideal of that true womanly pleasure—'a good talk.' Miss Minnie Kellett had heard something about the dinner-party at Lady Olive Despard's. She had heard it from the new 'inmate,' and she was as anxious to repeat it, as I was to learn how the proceedings had impressed a stranger at Wrottesley.

"'He is really an acquisition,' so ran Miss Minnie's glib testimony; 'so exceedingly affable and well informed, that I do assure you ma and I quite regret we did not propose something in the way of board as a mutual accommodation; a thing, you know, ma has never done, and has the greatest objection to, as you may suppose people who have seen better days, and cannot bring themselves readily to accept companionship they don't select, would be sure to feel. But Mr. Lester is such an exception to the general run of young men, that his society, at breakfast for instance, would be a real pleasure. He came so kindly to see ma this morning, when Phœbe mentioned that she had one of her bad headaches, and he told us how nice you looked yesterday, and what a pleasant party it was. And so, my dear, Miss Kindersley was there, it seems, and Mr. Lester says she is quite beautiful! She must have improved a good deal in looks by living abroad.'

"'She is very pretty indeed, but very quiet. She said very little to anybody, and nothing at all to me.'

"'But of course you will be quite intimate with the Bank people, now that Mr. Griffith is in Kindersley's?'

"'I don't think that follows at all, Miss Minnie,' said I, rather crossly, for she was straying off the track on which I wished her to continue, and, somehow or other, the topic of the Kindersleys did not interest me just then; indeed, it irritated me. 'Mrs. Kindersley never took any notice of us, you know, and I suppose Miss Kindersley will not visit where her mother did not. Of course it is quite an accident that Griffith is in the same set; it is a sort of thing that could hardly happen to anyone else. For instance, there's Mr. Finlay—he's in a better position in the Bank than Griffith; he's his senior, you know—that's what it's called, Griffith told me—and he is not in any society at all. I daresay Lady Olive Despard never heard of him, and I don't think he even goes to the Lipscotts. Oh no; we shall do very well without the Kindersleys, and the Kindersleys will do very well without us. And so Mr. Lester thinks Miss Kindersley quite beautiful?'

"'Yes, and so does Lord Barr—and oh, my dear, there's a real gentleman for you! Something like a lord! I'm sure he's the nicest of noblemen.'

"'Why where did you see him, Miss Minnie?'

"'See him! At the house, of course; he's for ever in and out after our inmate. Such friends as they are! He has only been four or five days at Despard Court, and he's been down to see Mr. Lester I don't know how often. You know they were out among the savages and the volcanoes together, and Mr. Lester saved Lord Barr's life in some dreadful place—not as a doctor, but as a friend, I mean; and they call each other Ted and Will, just like brothers. He came to breakfast this morning with our inmate, and he said to Phœbe, in such a pleasant way, "Couldn't Mrs. Kellett be coaxed to lend me a latch-key, for I'm sure you will be tired of opening the door for me?" And ma heard him, and actually went out into the passage, and took the liberty of telling him he could come in through the shop when he thought proper. Now you know that's not a thing one could do in a general way. And he was so pleased and hearty about it, and he told ma he had heard of her long before he came to Despard Court! And,' added Miss Minnie, irrelevantly, 'he's so handsome; don't you think so?'

"I could not answer this question offhand, for, although I had regarded Lord Barr with curiosity and interest, both as the brother of Lady Olive Despard and the first real live lord whom I had ever seen—an individual entitled to cut out 'the officers' in social importance—his face had not made a particular impression on me. I had a general notion that Lord Barr had bright blue eyes, a florid complexion, and a merry smile; but I had not thought about his looks, and I gave such a half-hearted assent to Miss Minnie's question, that she looked quite affronted.

"'Well, my dear, all I can say is, you must be hard to please, if you don't think Lord Barr a handsome man. I'm sure Captain Simcox is no more to compare with him than——'

"'Oh!' said I, hastily, 'I was not thinking at all of Captain Simcox. I don't admire him at all now; indeed, I think I used to go on with great nonsense about him; and, of course, I do think Lord Barr is very nice-looking—only rather too fair, I should say—don't you think so?'

"'That's a matter of taste, you see; and, of course, you like them dark, Mr. Griffith being dark; but I never saw a nicer-looking man than Lord Barr, to my mind. Not romantic, of course; but thoroughly kind-looking and homely, and an easy way with him, as if everything must go right with him, and everybody do just as he likes—out of persuasion, you know, not an ordering way.'

"'I know; the kind of manner that Miss Lipscott calls "the ease of the aristocrat." When I see him again, I will be sure to notice him more particularly, for I see he has made a conquest of you.'

"Miss Minnie simpered. But I had no especial fancy for talking of Lord Barr. I wanted to tell her the news, and did so when she came to a pause. She received the communication with all the interest which I had anticipated, and with the pleasure on my account which belonged to her really affectionate disposition. Miss Minnie's head might have been clearer and steadier with advantage, but her heart was sound, staunch, and tender.

"'I never heard anything so delightful in my life,' she exclaimed. 'It entirely changes your prospects in life, and very much for the better. Just fancy having a wealthy uncle, with a beautiful only daughter, living in a fine house in London, to go to! Why, you'll be a belle of the season, and you'll have carriages and horses, and go to balls, and be among all the people of fashion; and, very likely, you'll make a grand match.'

"'I don't want to do anything of that kind, thank you, Miss Minnie,' I said, almost angrily, and with the strangest feeling of discomfiture.

"'Of course, I don't mean merely a good match; I know you wouldn't marry anyone for whom your heart had not spoken; but think of the opportunities you will have of meeting people quite different from anything here.'

"We had already strayed an immeasurable distance from the officers, and my hero with the ready-gathered laurels and the becoming scar had vanished into oblivion.

"'Yes, I daresay; but never mind about that. I am wondering what kind of person my cousin Ida Pemberton is, and whether we shall get on well together. Papa, and my uncle, and Griffith too, take it all for granted, I suppose. They think we are just two girls, and sure to agree; but I don't think that is always so. One does not always like people because one ought, and because they are near at hand; and she and I may not like one another at all, you know. I daresay she is not a bit like an English girl, and as they are such rich people, and she is an only child, I suppose she has been spoilt and indulged, and she will think me very humdrum and stupid.'

"My mood was changing; my spirits were going down.

"'Indeed, I'm sure she will think nothing of the kind. When are you stupid and humdrum, I should like to know? Not when I see you, I can bear witness; and not when others see you, by all accounts. By all accounts you were the life and soul of the Lipscotts' party, and Mr. Lester told my mother you danced like a fairy.'

"'Did he? I did not dance much with him.'

"'Depend on it, your cousin will be charming, and charmed with you, and with the Dingle House, and everything.'

"'I wonder what she will think of Griffith?' said I, the idea striking me for the first time. 'I wonder what my uncle will think, when he finds my father's only son in a bank—he knows nothing about us at present, and he remembers when the Dwarrises were very different from what they are now. My first idea was that it might make a difference about Griffith, but papa and he tell me that is impossible. I don't understand how men feel about things of that kind, but I should have thought it would have been so nice for my uncle to make an officer of Griffith. If he's so full of interest about us all, why shouldn't he do what he has the money to do and we have not?'

"Miss Minnie had nothing to say in answer to this remark of mine; she merely shook her head. But one result of our conference, which did not end here, was a lovely idea which occurred to her, and which she suggested to me—that the endowment of my brother Griffith by my unknown uncle with an adequate fortune—the easiest thing in life, as it seemed to us women—was not the only way in which things might be made delightfully easy and comfortable for the Dwarris family.

"'What would be more natural and likely, you know,' suggested Miss Minnie; 'only be careful, my dear, and never let him suspect you of any such notion. Men are the real "kittle cattle," though they say it of us.'

"It was at this moment, when Miss Minnie's 'music lesson' had been prolonged to three times its natural duration, that Frosty came to look for me, in a great state of fuss, and announced that visitors had arrived, and that I was required immediately in the drawing-room.

"The visitors were Mr. Kindersley and his daughter."

THE OLD MASTERS IN PICCADILLY.

If one, in a dream about art, were offered by a good spirit a spell to call together some of the best pictures of Hogarth, Reynolds, and their contemporaries, the pictures he would summon would include, it is certain, many of the very pictures here brought together by the interest and exertions of the Royal Academicians.

Our best English pictures are so shut up in private collections, that it is seldom one can get any collective view of them, and out of twenty persons who know Raphael, and have seen Michael Angelo's greatest works, there are not three who have really studied the work of Hogarth's prime, or the choicest efforts of Reynolds's brush. We get an impression of caricature and grossness from the inferior pictures of Hogarth; of rough generalisation from Reynolds's; and of flimsiness from Gainsborough's; and, perhaps, carry through our lives this very unjust estimate of our early art. To complain that two-thirds of the pictures in this exhibition are portraits is just, but that is simply saying that our early artists were compelled to live by portrait-painting; and certainly, since Vandyke's time, no other nation has carried that branch of the art farther, nor is the painting a face, and investing it with beauty and intelligence, by any means a low province of painting.

We all know how hard our art found it to emerge into the light, except by ministering to individual vanity, and the incessant cravings of affectation. In Hogarth's time the Italian masters (little really understood by the bewigged and bemused cognoscenti who harangued upon them) held a high and unattainable rank in the English mind and market. The Caracci and disciples of all the lower schools of painting were dominant in every drawing-room, and the bulk of the minor collectors expended their guineas on Ruysdael, Cuyp, Teniers, Berghem, and those Dutch masters who finished highly, and painted common objects with the delicacy of miniature painters. Any idea that new paths in art could be opened, that art-land had not been thoroughly traversed, never entered the minds of the Sir Plumes of William and Queen Anne's time. When even our great portrait-painters were foreigners, any thought that English dell or mountain, English lake or river, contained beauty that Ruysdael never dreamt of, never arose even in the dreams of the English patrons of Claude and Vandervelde in Walpole's age. The cromlech builders were not more ignorant of Greek temples, or the carver of an African fetish of the Apollo Belvidere, than these men of nature. Portrait and Dutch landscape reigned supreme, and the reflex of them we see in the poems of the time—cold, stiff, and artificial.

As foreign art in England commenced with Holbein, so did real indigenous art commence with Hogarth; an art not, perhaps, endowed with the pure simple faith of Giotto and Fra Angelico—a lower and a grosser art, indeed, but still earnest, living, technically beautiful, and original. To Vandyke, the Dutch Kneller, and the German Lely, succeeded, in due time, Hogarth, and then English art arose. He was the first real thinker in English art.

In this exhibition you see this sturdy limner at his best. Here are some of the finest pictures that came out of his studio in Leicester-square. No wonder that Dr. Wagen once mistook one of his portraits for one of Reynolds's, for, at his best, his heads are so solid, so full of colour, so full of mind and character. He had no very refined or subtle sense of female beauty, yet his Peg Woffington is a beautiful embodiment of a frank, careless, laughing Irish girl. Peg wears a broad hat that droops gracefully over her eyes, and a fall of lace encloses her smiling face. The hat throws a broad mellow shade over her good-natured brow and saucy nose, while her little full mouth is rosy in the full daylight. Some pink and blue dress, prettily blended, add to the fine colour and rich tone of a delightful picture painted with evident enjoyment. That Peg was a mischievous, laughing, fascinating hussy, who can doubt after this picture? Hogarth's portrait of his wife is also, in its way, perfection. Sir James Thornhill's daughter is not by any means a beauty, but good sense and amiability unite in a firm, comely visage, beautifully radiant in colour and instinct with life. Hogarth's large picture of Garrick writing, and his wife, with an arch smile, stealing the pen from his fingers, is also an admirable work, but coarser in colour and execution than those which we have already mentioned. The furtive side smile of the actor is admirably conveyed, and there is a laughing mischief in the eye of his wife. But more interesting than these, and far more delicately and solidly painted, is Hogarth's early picture of a representation of the Beggar's Opera at the Lincoln's-inn Theatre. The stolid Macheath, in gold and scarlet, heavily ironed, stands calmly between his two weeping mistresses, one of whom is the Miss Fenton who soon afterwards married a duke. The bystanders are all celebrated people. The faces are somewhat mannerised, but are, no doubt, exact likenesses. The touch is fine as that of Teniers, the painting bright and clear as that of Jan Steen. This is a painter to be proud of indeed, and Gay must have exulted at such a record of his triumph.

And now we turn to Reynolds—no satirist, and with no power of telling a story, but an intellectual and vigorous painter of great men's and beautiful women's portraits—a painter who had studied deeply in the galleries of Rome, Florence, and Venice, and, deeper still, from nature—a man who never thoroughly mastered the laws of form; but, for all that, produced intellectual works—an artist whose eye for colour was divine, and who gave a larger and freer style to our whole art, urging students to study in a way to avoid his own defects. Unable to invent, Reynolds delighted to paint his more beautiful and less particular female sitters as nymphs and goddesses, throwing in a few "properties" in the foreground, to express their attributes. Of these idealised portraits we have a fine specimen in that of Miss Morris as Venus. This beautiful girl was the daughter of a West Indian governor, who, being reduced to poverty by the death of her father, came over to England and appeared as Juliet at Covent Garden. Dressed as a Grecian nymph, and not overclad, she leans back against a tree, and holds Cupid to her bosom. She has rich auburn hair and a brilliant complexion, to which Sir Joshua's brush has given the bloom of undying youth. Two rosebuds are oddly stuck in the shadow. This poor maiden, beautiful as an April daybreak, failed entirely on the stage through nervousness, and died soon after of consumption.

But for calm, stately beauty, commend us to the portrait of Mrs. Nisbett as Circe—an ambitious picture of a celebrated actress and beauty of the day. Clad in white, this lady sits erect and calmly dignified, her magic wand slanting from her hand. A monkey in the tree, a rather lumpy leopard, and a white cat are her attendant sprites. She looks as if she had just emerged from a big white lily.

As a contrast to this, and as one of Sir Joshua's best moments, let us take Mrs. Abington as Miss Prue, one of the most fascinating and charming of the president's wonderful female portraits. Mrs. Abington is not strictly a beauty; her nose is too small, her upper lip too broad and long; but she possesses to perfection the secretive spirit and humour of the true actress, and, as she leans over the chair-top, with her thumb-nail, mischievously innocent, touching her mouth, the old charm of her acting arises before us. You feel that, at a moment, when the grave old man or the shy, respectful lover is gone, she will break into a fit of irresistible laughter.

For every shade of grave courtliness, dignity, and chivalrous self-respect, the portraits here show that none of our portrait-painters excelled Reynolds. Whatever the face and bearing he saw, he could reproduce; sometimes, no doubt, heightened by his own intellect and wish to please, though he was no flatterer. Even Thurlow, who "looked wiser than anyone ever was," with his firm face and arched, black eyebrows, grew grander before Reynolds's easel; and about his Barré, Dunning, and Shelburne there is an intellectual force that surely needed an equal mind to convey to the canvas its subject. In this painter's pseudo-classical manner we have his Hon. Mrs. Bouverie, of Delapré, and child. This lady was the intimate friend of Mrs. Crewe, the great Whig toast of the day:

> To buff and blue
> And Mrs. Crewe,

whose health an enthusiastic Whig once drank from one of her shoes. Of Reynolds's own illustrious friends, we have Garrick as Kitely, in Ben Jonson's capital play of Every Man in his Humour. Garrick was then fifty-two, and Reynolds has given perfectly the sour, drawn look of the jealous man whom Shakespeare's great friend has painted so admirably. It is Garrick with his stage face on. For a quiet portrait, full of character, that of Sir John St. Aubyn, Bart., is an excellent example; the expression is acute and full of life; the face is glowing with rich colour, subdued by time; and the lapelled coat is treated with a certain style that indicates strongly the gentleman. Nor must we forget, among the beautiful, though not too virtuous, sitters of Reynolds, Kitty Fisher, representing Cleopatra dissolving the pearl. The languid eyes of this "bold and extravagant quean" Reynolds has given admirably, as she drops the pearl into the rich goblet. The colour of this picture is very rich and melting. Kitty Fisher, like many of Reynolds's frail beauties, is not strictly beautiful; she has a very retroussé nose, and a by no means perfect face. But Reynolds knows how to invest features with a natural sentiment, a grace, and tenderness that probably did not exist in the actual sitter. The dignity that Reynolds could throw over rather hopeless subjects, yet without flattery, is well shown in his portrait of Richard, first Lord Edgecumbe, with a wolf-hound. This we should take as one of his early Devonshire subjects. The first lord was a worthy, stolid sort of man, with a face as broad as it is long, and the big dog, jumping up, is cleverly but roughly struck in. Of Reynolds's rougher and harsher portraits, those of John Paterson, Master of the Barbers' Company and Chairman of the Blackfriars Bridge Committee, is a good honest specimen. Reynolds gave most of his sitters a geniality and good sense, which was sometimes only the reflection of his own mind. The portrait of his friend, Lord Boringdon, is very hearty and genial; nor must we forget the Laughing Girl, one of those portraits of children painted, perhaps, rather for pleasure than profit, which became, in his hands, typical and poetical. The auburn-haired child, with arms resting on a gate, peers forward, with half-shut eyes, innocently crafty. The upper part of the picture (perhaps from a series of experiments in colour) has grown into a mass of paint that makes it look like alto-relievo. It is much imperilled from the experimental and dangerous mediums which Sir Joshua tried, one after the other; yet the colour is still beautiful and masterly. Of his children's portraits, the Hon. Frances Harris (afterwards Lady Frances Cole) is a pleasing example. The child is so well-bred, yet so innocently careless, and the reddish dog carries out the colour of her rich auburn hair.

When we turn to Reynolds's fascinating rival, that less-learned and less-solid painter, Gainsborough, we see a manner the very opposite to Sir Joshua. Light, swift-sketching Gainsborough always pleases. There is a pleasant wilfulness and spontaneity about his touch, which, though it sometimes imparts a look of flimsiness and careless taste to his pictures, gives them, also, a grace and individuality that we find in none of his contemporaries. Reynolds, though of a higher ambition, builds up his heads with laborious care. Gainsborough seems to breathe upon the canvas, and they flash up as in a mirror. Reynolds's portraits were often returned as unlike, and purchasers loudly complained of the fleeting colours, that have now rendered many pictures of value, like those of the Berkeley family, mere ghostly shadows. Gainsborough seems to have aimed lower, and to have refrained from pigmentary experiments. He attempted no imitations of the old masters, like Reynolds; yet, like him, was fond of painting children. The Cottage Girl is a pretty instance of this class of half-portrait subject; and he was bolder with his landscape backgrounds than Sir Joshua. Gainsborough's portraits of the Earl of Radnor's family are excellent for life, truth, and firmness; but, after all, it is in women that he especially excels. Mark his Lady de Dunstanville. There is a piquancy and sensibility about that face which Reynolds never reached. The lady wears a yellow dress, and holds a drooping white feather in one hand. The enormous broad-brimmed black hats, worn at this time, are skilfully used by Gainsborough; and he throws more subtlety into the face than Reynolds. His versatility, too, is great. Nothing can be more full of life and vivacity than his big Pomeranian dog. His cattle are excellent, and his landscapes rich in colour and true to nature. He is not so solid as old Crome, or so grand as Wilson; but there is a certain charm about his trees and country lanes that you find nowhere else.

There is a foolish old story that Gainsborough could never paint Garrick, and one day threw down his pallet and brushes in despair of catching the expression of a Proteus. This is certainly untrue, for of all the likenesses of Garrick there is none more vivid and vivacious than that of Gainsborough's, painted for Stratford. The actor in full dress, blue and scarlet, stands, with one arm round a bust of Shakespeare, the stony face looking down upon him with a gracious smile of approval. Garrick, with legs crossed and the light of genius in his eyes, is self-conscious but perfectly natural. The background is said to represent a favourite haunt of the actor near his villa at Hampton. There is a playful audacity about this picture that is eminently characteristic of Gainsborough, whose animal spirits were high and whose nature was bright and sunny. With all his rough bonhomie, Gainsborough, however, could be courtly; his full-length portrait of Queen Charlotte is a masterly example of looking at the best side of things. The enormous German mouth is pinched into the sweetest smile, the small eyes shine, and with careless cleverness the painter has swept in the gauzy gown and the gold spangles. The full-length of the Duke of Cumberland is less successful. The duke is handsome, but he walks like a dancing-master, and there is something cold and crude about the colour of the whole. In the portrait sketches of honest Queen Charlotte and three of the princesses, Gainsborough, pleased with his sitters, has again excelled. Nothing more sparkling and piquante can be conceived than these sketches, and by animation of eyes, fine complexion, and royal manner, the painter has produced four delicious pieces of flattery, which are still as fresh and bright as the day they came from the easel. A very charming sketch (for it is little more) is the Mall in St. James's Park in the summer of 1780 (the year of the Gordon riots). There are beaux and belles on both sides of this swift, joyous sketch, and down the centre of the Mall comes a group of the leading beauties of the day, looking like swans as their white gauzes float them along. A graceful portrait of Perdita by this same artist should not be overlooked.

There is a great falling off when we turn from Gainsborough to Romney, though Romney had grace too, a quick eye for beauty, and a spark of genius about him. His portrait of Lady Hamilton in youth—perhaps while still a maid-servant—is painted with a careless taste that probably Romney considered a necessary attribute of genius, so the drapery has no folds, the flesh no half tints. Nevertheless there is great beauty and sensitiveness in the half-turned face, and a sentiment that greater painters do not always attain.

Opie's strong, coarse likenesses do not bear the juxtaposition of Reynolds. Yet they have the air of inveterate truth, and are vigorous and honest. The Red Boy, in a skeleton suit of red, playing at cricket, is a painful specimen of his art, but there is much pomposity and true character about his Old Housekeeper of Sir J. St. Aubyn's, with her vast pillow of a head-dress. Perhaps the strongest of his portraits here is that of Sir John St. Aubyn, Bart., which has character and quiet dignity.

Of the brilliant flashy portraits of Lawrence there are not many examples. The Colonel David Markham is spirited; but his great work here is the really grand group of portraits of the Baring family, which, though slighter and more feminine than Reynolds, is almost as effective. It is a wonderful apotheosis of a merchant's family. The two figures, bending over the map to discuss some great commercial scheme, are finely treated, the faces are vivid and life-like, but the sort of protesting expression of the seated man we do not quite comprehend. Still, somehow, beside Reynolds even this looks like water-colours.

Phillip's excellent portrait of Byron, so well known by the engravings, strikes us as being coarser than it came out on the steel. The lips are larger and the mouth much less refined. Of Cosway's dainty trickery the portrait of Viscountess Melbourne is a fair example; but what a poor fan-mount work it is with all his daintiness!

To turn from portrait art, let us give a glance at bombastic Fuseli. With him everything is overdone and inflated. The Buckbasket scene with Falstaff is below contempt; and as for the Witch scene in Macbeth, it is the greatest caricature that was ever produced—the faces and attitudes are so outrageous, the want of common sense so palpable. In Psyche passing the Fates there is neither colour, drawing, nor meaning. Yet this man was one of the great teachers of our art-youth, and wrote patronising lectures about Titian and Michael Angelo!

In the midst of sturdy, rough Constables; smooth, old-fashioned Callcotts; calm, grand old Wilsons; and dashing Gainsboroughs, Turner's Lowther Castle stands out immortal. This picture, painted for the Earl of Lonsdale at the culmination of the painter's best period, shines like a sun over all the other landscapes around it. In the foreground are Turner's usual spindly trees; beyond, a stream painted to perfection, the water so clear that it reflects everything. High up on the hill is the castle, radiant in the sunlight, which glows in the water, and through the leaves of the trees and bushes. No private person should allow himself such a treasure, it is too good for anyone but the whole world. Never was picture so penetrated, so steeped in light as this! As you look, the leaves grow transparent, the sunshine passes through. It is an effect of the transforming power of sunlight that, to any other painter, would have seemed as hopeless to reproduce as an Apocalypse vision. Look from this great vision at Berghem or Ruysdael, and see what mere masses of paint the Dutchmen have thrown together! Look at Claude, with his stiff and artificial temples, hard, mechanical waves, and mannered sky. Cuyp truly steeped his pictures in golden light; but there is no such magic in Cuyp as there is in the work of this great unconscious poet. We might challenge the world to match this landscape. Compare it with that splendid impudence of Rubens, the huge blue diagram of the mountains round the Escurial, or the measured dulness of the ripples on Claude's Venetian shores!

The careless, easy power of Morland is well shown in his large and unfinished picture of the Roadside Inn; while a Sea Piece gives one an excellent notion of the skill and manner of George Chambers. Barker, of Bath, paints with much truth and vigour; and as for old Richard Wilson, his great blue mountains, either in Wales or Italy, have always a quiet, tranquil, reflective grandeur and breadth that renders them pleasing.

Every one (we may say, in bringing to a conclusion this brief sketch of a very notable exhibition of pictures) who wishes to form something more than a passing acquaintance with English art at its best, should, by all means, pay a visit to the old masters in Piccadilly.

GONE AWAY.

THE winter wears the old pure dress you used to love so well,
The snow lies dazzling in the sun, on moorland, hill, and fell;
Gay clad in silver tracery stands every leafless tree,
High pile the drifts of frozen white on meadow, land, and lea;
The robin that you always fed lights on the ivy spray,
Your dog lies wistful at your door, but you are gone away.

The yule-log crackles on the hearth; out in the moonlit snow,
The waits are singing the same songs we echoed long ago;
With a pale mimicry of mirth, old customs, one by one,
Are followed through the Christmas hours as you would have them done;
The ancient feast the children hail, and play the ancient play,
But even through their laughter sigh that you are gone away.

Life will resume its quiet course, by cloud or sunshine crossed,
And only for one heart remain, "the sense of something lost;"
They will pass on, the dated days, close held in love's fond keeping,
And Spring will call on leaf and flower, to wake them from their sleeping.
You prized the yearly miracle that Nature works in May,
The buds will blow in England, Dear, but you are gone away.

Gone from the happy intercourse of kindred heart and mind;
Gone from the daily round that used its joys in you to find;
But from the longing, yearning love, the clinging thought and prayer,
The fond recurring reference, the tender thought and care,
From the dreaming of the lonely night, the memory of the day,
Dear, from all this, and more than this, you are not gone away.

KEANE MALCOMBE'S PUPIL.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

IT was one of the first warm days of early spring, the day on which I, Mabel Meredith, (called "Mab"), completed my twenty-ninth year.

Now some tell us that spring is a "glad" time, a "joyous season;" but can we feel it so, when we look on the awakening life all around us, the fresh dawning beauty of tree and flower, and remember that our youth, the spring that comes but once in each life, is passing by? To a single woman, thirty is a sort of barrier, a fence marking the furthermost boundary of youth, and to this boundary I am perilously near.

Some such thoughts were in my mind, as I wended my way down the long lane to Abbeylands. In every nook and crevice of the low stone walls that edged the lane, tiny green things were waking into life; little tender bundles of velvety leaves, and soft fluffy curled-up balls, told of baby-ferns, soon to grow tall and fair, and wave brave green banners in the summer sunshine; here and there sharp pale green shafts pushed upwards through the moist earth, and told of a glowing orchid stirring in its sleep deep down in a buried bulb; and in the distance I could see a faint tinge of pink upon the trees, and I knew the rosy green-tipped buds were swelling into springtide life.

The long lane led from Whitegates, where Aunt Janet and I lived in peaceful content, to Abbeylands, the "great house" which was the glory of our village. You could see the massive grey-stone gables of the old house peeping through groves of pine and beech trees, as you stood on the lawn at Whitegates; and when first I came from India, a little strange motherless creature, it was one of my great delights to wander as far as the big gates; to squeeze my pale little visage in between the bars, stretch out my thin arms, and clap my hands to startle the little soft brown rabbits that nestled in the long grass, and glanced up at me so quickly with ears erect and great frightened eyes.

I think it took Aunt Janet all the rest of her natural life to quite realise the fact of my existence at Whitegates—for to the staid, methodical Scotchwoman, whose life knew little change, and whose quiet days were as like each other as a row of beads upon a string, it was a startling revolution to hear me tearing down the wide low stairs, that led from the white-stoned entrance-hall to the delicious old-fashioned drawing-room, built out like a turret at one end; or to come upon me, curled up cat-wise, in a corner of the deep-cushioned seat that ran all round the big window, my black kitten cuddled in my arms, and a pair of curious brown eyes looking fixedly at her from a bush of wavy hair. This hair was the sad occasion of many troubles, for Aunt Janet would comb it back, as smooth as its curly nature would allow, and carefully pack it away into a brown silk net, congratulating herself upon the child's neat appearance, only to find me half an hour afterwards, with a perfect gooseberry bush of frizzly tresses flying out behind me, tearing after kitty down the sloping lawn. At the white gate, from which our cottage took its name, stood a great dark fir-tree; and here I spent many a pleasant hour, seated in solitary grandeur beneath its shade, and telling stories to myself and kitty, about a little tiny brown squirrel that used to peep down at us from his perch among the branches.

A simple Scotch lass, Nannie by name, had replaced my poor ayah, for whom I wept so bitterly, when she returned to her own country; and it is a strange proof of how the mind of a child forms its own conceptions from external objects, that when Aunt Janet, on Sunday afternoons, administered to me what she called "a diet of scriptural instruction," and told me of angels in heaven, I straightway conceived of these ministering spirits as black, because—poor little motherless child that I was!—the best love and care that I had ever known had been that of my faithful ayah, whose dark face I had so often found bending over me when I awoke from sleep. The horror that Aunt Janet and Nannie experienced on the discovery of my heterodox ideas, is one of the most vivid of my child-memories.

"It's a fearfu' thing," said Nannie, with hands and eyes upraised, "to hear the puir wee lammie talking o' the Lord's blessed angels as if they were deils!" but all unabashed, I looked gravely from one to the other, and still clung lovingly to the idea of one black angel, though all the others were white! Aunt Janet looked mournfully at me over her spectacles, and was evidently puzzled as to what she should make of the new arrival at Whitegates.

The plain explanation of my appearance was this:

My mother, Miss Fraser's only sister, had married an officer in the Indian service; she died in India when I was born, and my father, heart-broken by his loss, could not bring himself to part with me; so, tenderly cared for by my ayah, I grew from a sickly babe into a white-faced, elfish-looking child. I could remember being taken to kiss my father as he lay dying; and then all faded away that was not ships, and sea, and being in a strange new world, with nothing to cling to but the black face of the ayah, and the bright-coloured cotton scarf about her neck. But the ayah was sent away, and then life resolved itself, for me, into Whitegates, and Aunt Janet's spectacles, and Nannie, and the black kitten, and the squirrel in the tall dark pine-tree.

A strange, imaginative, lonely child, I grew, with the passing years, into peaceful solitary maidenhood, almost wholly without companions of my own age; yet not ill-educated, for the manse was my schoolroom, and the minister my master.

I should like to bring before my readers a vivid picture of this well-beloved guide of my youth. A stern old Calvinist, of like nature with the sturdy Covenanters, his ancestors, was the white-haired minister, the Reverend Keane Malcombe. A man of simple, unpretending sanctity, of Christian singleness of heart, and yet a man of deep and varied culture, and with an artist mind to see and note all the beauties of earth and sky. He taught me to know the name of every flower in the fields, and every bird that peopled the woods; and sometimes we read together that wondrous "Cosmos," wherein the name of God is not once written, and yet where the mind is led, as it were, into the very presence of the divine Creator. Strange studies these for a girl! Yet, in the years to come, I was often grateful that I had been thus led to find in books my best companions, and, in the study of nature, the best consolation for a lonely life.

Thus my early girlhood passed away without "love," in its fullest sense, being to me more than a name. My master had led me in such "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace," he had shown me so well how to gather content from all the beauties of this fair world, and led me by the teachings of an intellect pure and true, to give, even to the common things of life, a beauty beyond mere surface thought, that the need of some stirring romance, to make life worth the living, had never come to me, as it comes to so many women.

The minister was now getting an old man; but if he leaned a trifle more heavily on his stout stick as we wandered along the lanes, his eye brightened no less than heretofore at the sight of some new floral treasure, or some feathered novelty.

The manse was a low, unpretending building, with those diamond-paned windows now so seldom seen, and near it stood the kirk and the burial-ground, where flowers bloomed almost as plentifully as in the manse garden itself.

Now the Kirk of Scotland is not remarkable for the floral decoration of her burial-places, and the minister was thought to have some "foreign notions" on this point. Yet none murmured.

The brightest and most cheery little room in the manse had been for years devoted to the use of a patient, uncomplaining sufferer, once the minister's active, busy helpmate. To his "Lizzie's" bedside was taken every new-found flower, and here, too, he sought wise and loving words of sympathy in the holiest duties and anxieties of his calling.

The manse had always been a childless home, and the minister was wont to say, "One corner of our hearts was empty, but little Mab was sent from across the seas to fill it."

Truly a pleasant resting-place had I found that "empty corner."

I have no more happy, restful, tender memories than those of the quiet hours spent with my books in the minister's study.

How the simple room told the story of his life and character! A large Bible lay open on his desk, and on the table by the window, where the light was clearest, countless specimens of field-flowers, dried, and neatly fastened upon paper. Over the mantel-shelf hung a print of Christ blessing little children. This picture had been the occasion of some exercising of spirit to various members of his congregation.

"Surely," reasoned they, "it pointed to episcopal leanings—nay, even worse tendencies!" But none had the hardihood to broach the subject to Keane Malcombe, and in time it grew to be an understood thing that the picture in the study was to be looked upon as the foible of a great mind, and to be respected accordingly, though by no means to be taken as a precedent for others to follow. To me the picture was a revelation.

That face, full of divine pity, bending down in unutterable love, drew me with an irresistible force; I used to look up at it, standing on tiptoe and holding by the mantel-shelf, and think that just all that love and pity was what He felt for me when they sent my ayah away, and left me a little desolate mortal, alone in the new world of Whitegates. My master told me "that none were ever sad and lonely now, but the same pity and love looked down upon them from the same divine face, though they could not see it." Thus I gathered the herbs that were to be for my healing in the time of need.

In my childish days, Abbeylands, with its long rows of closed windows and its silent gardens, was a delicious mystery to me—a kind of respectable Castle of Otranto; and when first Aunt Janet told me of the beautiful lady who once lived there, I immediately invested her with all the bewitching attributes of a fairy princess; but, as I grew up to years of greater discretion, these fabulous ideas faded, and a pitiful interest in the unknown Châtelaine of Abbeylands took their place. A widow, with one child, she had been for long years a wanderer in strange lands. People said she would come back when the young heir was of age; meanwhile, he was learning grand things in foreign parts, and Abbeylands was desolate.

About two years before this story opens, all my romance and dreams of the widowed owner of Abbeylands were tested by the sudden appearance of the reality. A flutter of preparation made itself felt at the "big house," a thrill of excitement pervaded the village, and then Mrs. Forsythe arrived in our midst.

It is seldom enough that reality comes up to expectation; but, in truth, my best conceptions of her had fallen short of the truth.

She was that rare thing, a faultlessly-beautiful woman—a woman with such a perfect face, that not even sadness could mar or detract from its beauty.

Time had borne her some distance from her sorrow, yet not so far but that its shadow still fell upon her. The soft dark eyes had a weary look; and here and there silver threads mingled with the silken hair, raised high on either temple and carried back beneath a white lace fichu.

I may truly say Mrs. Forsythe was my "first love," for the absorbing affection sometimes felt by a younger woman for her older friend has in it much of the devotion, though it may lack the passion, of love in its closest sense. She was to me something, the like of which I had never hoped to come across in my quiet uneventful life, and the finding of her was an epoch in my existence.

Why Mrs. Forsythe was drawn to me I cannot say; but, in a shorter time than I could have believed it possible, I was her constant companion—her shadow, her humble, loving worshipper.

If Aunt Janet had any jealous twinges about my time and thoughts being so withdrawn from her and Whitegates, I think her conscious pride in the fact of "her niece" being "fille de la maison" at the "big house" acted as a salve; and as to my faithful Nannie, she honestly believed I had only to be seen to be appreciated by the world in general.

"There's nane need be ashamed of ye, Miss Mabel, at kirk or market," she would say, in innocent belief in my transcendent charms; whereas I had overheard Aunt Janet lamenting over my being "just an ordinar' body, and no like a true-born Fraser" (for Aunt Janet was a "Fraser," and it was noted, in this distinguished clan, that the men were all stalwart Highlanders, and the women "braw lassies"). It may, therefore, be imagined I was insignificant, at the best, and a degenerate specimen of the Fraser clan.

Mrs. Forsythe admired and appreciated my master sufficiently to satisfy even me, and that circumstance formed no small portion of the bond of love between us.

Sometimes my dear companion would touch lightly upon her past life, but never more than touch. I do not think the sore was healed enough to bear much handling, even from the most loving hands.

She spoke much of her absent Donald. He was her darling, her one earthly treasure; she was proud of his talent, and held his love for her to be a most precious thing.

And now, this first day of early spring, the heir was coming home; and even as I went down the long lane, I knew Donald Forsythe was on his way to Abbeylands.

Filled with thoughts half sad, half joyous, I went on my way. I asked myself, almost for the first time in my life, if that life had not been somewhat wasted, inasmuch as it had been without that which seemed to make life sweet to most women. I rebelled in my heart against the signs of spring all around me, yet I rejoiced for the joy of the loving heart, that I knew was awaiting the coming of her darling.

Through the village, past the manse, where a kindly face smiled at me from the study-window, and then I came to the quaint, high-stepped stile that led into the Abbeylands cornfields. This stile was like a little ladder on one side, and a bigger ladder on the other, where the fall was deepest. Few of the village children attained any age to speak of, without coming to grief by falling from its tempting bars.

Mrs. Forsythe was on the terrace when I reached Abbeylands, and as I looked at her, her beauty struck me as it were afresh, for I had never seen it so adorned as now, to do honour to the coming of the heir.

The rich purple velvet of her dress set off to exquisite advantage the pure, creamy tint of her perfect face; an unwonted gladness was in her eyes, and a smile upon her lips. "I cannot give you a hand in welcome, Mab," she said as I mounted the broad stone steps, and she looked down at her hands filled with sweet flowers and delicate ferns, gathered from the greenhouses hard by. "But you are very welcome, dear, and just in time to help me to decorate the rooms, to do due honour to my boy. I shall really be afraid to face Archie, after robbing his treasures in this way!"

Her happiness seemed such a holy thing, and so complete in itself, that I suddenly felt as though I had been in some way guilty for intruding upon it.

I tried to put this feeling into words.

"I don't quite think I ought to have come here this morning—you would, I am sure, rather have been left alone; but I did not think of it; and—it is my birthday; and I wanted 'a greeting.'"

We had entered the house, and she laid her load of flowers down on the hall-table, put a soft hand on either shoulder, and bent down to my small altitude, and kissed me tenderly.

"There is my 'greeting,' child," she said; "and almost more than you deserve, too, for daring to speak as though you could be unwelcome."

"You are very good to me," and here I felt a kind of choke in my voice. "I have been thinking myself into a fit of the vapours all the way here. You see I feel so old!—thirty to-day!"

"Are you so much?" she said; "no one would think it, you are such a little bit of a thing—a real 'Queen Mab!' Why, when you are a very old woman you will be like a dear old fairy godmother! I, you know, shall develope into a large, stately dame, and go to visit my tenants leaning on Donald's arm. What nonsense you make me talk, Mabel! I, the mother of a son twenty-one years of age, should be more staid!"

I took up a great bunch of dewy snowdrops.

"Where shall I put these pretty things?"

"Take them to my dressing-room," she said, "they are favourites with Donald, and he comes to pay me cosy visits there, in the 'gloaming,' as you thorough Scotch folks so prettily call it."

In her bed-room, through which I had to pass, I paused, and stood with the snowdrops in my hand before the picture of her son.

This is what I saw.

A boy, with clean-cut features, and laughing eyes, dark grey, with long black lashes, a mass of dark wavy hair, falling slightly over the square brow, and the greatest beauty of the face lying in the perfect mouth with its short upper lip, and sweet smile. Such was Donald Forsythe, the widow's only son, the heir of all the broad abbey lands.

The light fell full upon his winsome face, and the picture was so placed that every morning, when the mother woke, her boy was smiling down upon her.

As I held the flowers in my hands, the merry eye seemed looking into mine, and the smiling mouth ready to break into happy laughter.

I had seen that picture often before. I was destined to see it yet again, to look at it, not smiling as now, with flower-laden hands, but through a mist of blinding tears, and with a passion of pain at my heart. Oh, when we touch the first, fresh link of some new chain that is to lead us to a baptism of suffering, well is it that no voice can tell us of the rocks that will tear our bleeding feet, the "thick darkness" through which we shall have to pass on the road, along which we are then taking our first step!

ROYAL OMENS, SIGNS, AND PORTENTS.

Shakespeare makes Claudius speak of the divinity that "doth hedge a king," as an effectual means of defeating treason; and Beaumont and Fletcher have availed themselves of the same thought when they represent Amintor, in The Maid's Tragedy, as declaring to the monarch who figures so villainously in that work—

> I fear not swords; for as you are mere man
> I dare as easily kill you for this deed
> As you dare think to do it. But there is
> Divinity about you that strikes dead
> My rising passions: as you are my king,
> I fall before you and present my sword
> To cut mine own flesh, if it be your will.

At this time, and long afterwards, royalty was most superstitiously regarded; the king was deemed on all hands to be something more than mortal; in right of his office and his descent, he was clothed with certain supernatural attributes. The English king described in Macbeth well represents this old-world monarch, with special mention of his supposed gift of healing by the mere touch of his hand:

> There are a crew of wretched souls
> That stay his cure; their malady convinces
> The great assay of art; but at his touch,
> Such sanctity hath Heaven given his hand,
> They presently amend . . . . .
> A most miraculous work in this good king,
> Which often, since my here-remain in England,
> I have seen him do. How he solicits Heaven
> Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people
> All swollen and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
> The mere despair of surgery, he cures;
> Hanging a golden stamp about their necks
> Put on with holy prayers; and 'tis spoken,
> To the succeeding royalty he leaves
> The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
> He hath a Heavenly gift of prophecy,
> And sundry blessings hang about his throne,
> And speak him full of grace.

It has been alleged that this account of the king's miraculous powers was inserted in the tragedy, to gratify the vanity of James the First. The "golden stamp," we may note, was a coin called an angel, of the value of ten shillings, bearing on one side a figure of St. Michael, and on the other a representation of a ship in full sail. The king, in pursuance of the ritual prescribed by the Prayer-book, crossed with a golden angel the sore of the sick person brought to him, while the last clause of the gospel of the office was repeated. This done, the chirurgeon was to lead away the sick, and the chaplain finished the service. The patient was to have the angel bored, and a ribbon being drawn through it, to hang it about his neck, and to wear it "until he should be full whole," which might, of course, be a very long while. In the Duke of Buckingham's play, The Rehearsal, when Prince Prettyman talks of going to the wars, Tom Thimble observes: "I shall see you come home like an angel for the king's evil, with a hole bored through you." "An ugly office, and a simple one," says Mr. Pepys, who saw the king "heale" at Whitehall in 1661.

It does not appear that any English sovereign, after Anne, attempted to heal by touch, and Dr. Johnson is reputed to have been one of the last patients who tested the efficacy of the old superstitious process. He was but five years old, however, when Anne died in 1714, and of that sovereign he could only state that he had "a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood." It need hardly be stated that Johnson was not healed by the royal touch, although there was but little lack of faith in his case. Boswell ventured indeed to banter his distinguished friend in regard to the efficacy of the healing, observing, with allusion to the Jacobite principles, in which Johnson had been educated, and to which he long remained faithful, "his mother did not carry him far enough. She brought him from Lichfield to London, but she should have taken him to Rome," i.e., to the Pretender.

The Hanoverian monarchs did not affect to cure by royal touch; nevertheless, their partisans claimed for them that miraculous power, and for some time, in defiance of the conviction of the Jacobites, that the gift had departed with the Stuarts, the Prayer-book continued to present, as an important part of its contents, "The Office of the Healing," until George the First finally ordered the omission of the form. The History of England of Thomas Carte, published between 1747 and 1755 (of which Warton said, "You may read Hume for his eloquence, but Carte is the historian for facts"), incurred much reprobation, owing to the author's affirming that the royal gift of healing was inherent in the Pretender. The Corporation of London withdrew their subscription and patronage, the author's credit was destroyed, and his undertaking left incomplete; not, let it be understood, because of his credulity as to the magic of the royal touch, but because he believed that extraordinary power to be vested in the house of Stuart, and to be absolutely denied the Hanoverian monarchs.

"The curing of the king's evil, by the touch of the king, does much puzzle our philosophers," writes Aubrey, "for whether our kings were of the house of York or Lancaster, it did the cure, i.e.," he is careful to add, "for the most part;" and he relates how, when Charles the First was prisoner at Carisbrook Castle, "there was a woman touched by him, who had the king's evil in her eye, and had not seen in a fortnight before, her eyelids being glued together; as they were at prayers (after the touching) the woman's eyes opened. Mr. Seymer Bowman, with many others, were eye-witnesses of this." He further states that in Somersetshire, according to general repute, "some were cured of the king's evil by the touch of the Duke of Monmouth." It would seem, indeed, that this peculiar gift of healing pertained not only to kings and to pretenders to the crown, but was often possessed by any one happening to be a seventh son, born in wedlock, and with no daughter interrupting the line of sons. Aubrey, on the authority of our old English chronicles, mentions a child born in Kent, in the reign of King Henry the Third, who, "at two years old, cured all diseases:" certainly, a very surprising child. Another case, that of "Samuel Scot, seventh son of Mr. William Scot, of Hedington, in Wiltshire," Aubrey states on his own authority, being "very well satisfied of this relation, for I knew him very well, and his mother was my kinswoman." Samuel Scot, it appears, as a child, performed wonderful cures by touching only, "viz., as to the king's evil, wens, &c., but as he grew to be a man, the virtue did decrease, and had he lived longer, might perhaps have been spent." Not every seventh son, however, might expect to be thus gifted. For a boy, also a seventh son, employed as a servant by Samuel Scot's father, could work no cures at all. And sometimes a dead hand has wrought as many marvels as the living fingers of kings, princes, pretenders, and seventh sons. Aubrey instances the case of a certain painter of Stowel, in Somersetshire, near Bridgewater, who suffered from "a wen in the inside of his cheek, as big as a pullet's egg, which, by the advice of one, was cured by once or twice touching or rubbing with a dead woman's hand (é contra, to cure a woman, a dead man's hand); he was directed first to say the Lord's Prayer, and to beg a blessing. He was perfectly cured in a few weeks. I was at the man's house who attested it to me, as also to the Reverend Mr. Andrew Paschal, who went with me."

The gift of healing by touch was supposed to have descended to our princes from Edward the Confessor. But the miraculous power was not peculiar to British royalty; it has been shown that the kings of France long claimed to be similarly endowed, albeit they employed a less presumptuous form of words, and when they laid hands upon the sick and suffering, said simply, "Le Roi te touche; Dieu te guérisse." Now and then the remedy was as fatal as the disease, as upon the occasion described by Evelyn, when (in 1684) "there was so great a concourse of people, with their children to be touched for the evil, that six or seven were crushed to death, by pressing at the chirurgeon's door for tickets."

While kings were thus haloed by superstition, it is not surprising that omens, and signs, and portents, were found to be constantly attendant upon them; that men perceived marvels in very simple matters, and gave way to fear, and trembling, and foreboding, upon the lightest provocation. Charles the First seems to have been the object of much consideration of this kind; his misfortunes and his fate appealed strongly to the imaginative and the credulous, and inclined men strongly to the seeing of visions, and the dreaming of dreams, and generally to the acceptance of the prodigious. Mr. Carlyle reckons the execution of Charles to be "the most daring action any body of men, to be met with in history, ever, with clear consciousness, set themselves to do. . . . . The action of the English regicides did in effect strike a damp like death through the heart of flunkyism universally in this world. Whereof flunkyism, cant, cloth-worship, or whatever ugly name it have, has gone about incurably sick ever since; and is now at length in these generations very rapidly dying." It was observed, that as the body of the beheaded king was borne from St. George's Hall, to the west end of the chapel royal, the weather underwent a change; the sky, which had been serene and clear, became overcast, and presently the snow fell so fast that the black velvet pall was all white ("the colour of innocency," notes Sir Thomas Herbert in his record of the two last years of the king's reign), "being thickly covered with snow." It was then remembered that Charles had been styled "the white king," from having, as many stated, worn robes of white satin when he was crowned in Westminster Abbey in 1625, in lieu of the purple robes worn by his predecessors at their coronation. Subsequently, handkerchiefs dipped in his blood were supposed to possess the healing virtue he had been credited with. Macaulay has ascribed to the king's "Vandyke dress, handsome face and peaked beard," and to consideration for his domestic virtues, the sympathy and loyalty with which his memory has been so long regarded. The face, with its livid complexion, cold weak eyes, and prolonged nose, is not perhaps so specially comely; but what may be called the Vandyke accessories are most admirable. From the first, however, Charles was thought to have an ominous look. Ben Jonson, in his masque of The Gypsies Metamorphosed, made one of the characters say of Prince Charles:

> How right he doth confess him in his face,
> His brow, his eye, and every mark of state;
> As if he were the issue of each grace,
> And bore about him both his fame and fate.

There seemed a prophetic ring about the lines. Bernini, the famous Italian sculptor, employed to execute a bust from Vandyke's well-known portrait, representing the full front, three-quarter, and profile aspects of the king, is reported to have said that he "had never seen any face which showed so much greatness and, withal, such marks of sadness and misfortune." "The sculptor found great fault with the forehead as most unfortunate." Aubrey further notes: "There was a seam in the middle of his forehead (downwards), which is a very ill sign in Metoposcopie."

A king's coronation is a recognised time for the occurrence of omens and presages. Mr. Pepys notes that, at the coronation of

Charles the Second, after the king had quitted the Hall, although for two days the weather had held up fair, "it fell a-raining, and thundering, and lightening as I have not seen it do for some years, which people did take great notice of; God's blessing on the work of these two days, which is a foolery to take too much notice of such things." Aubrey writes: "King Charles the Second was crowned at the very conjunction of the Sun and Mercury, Mercury being then in Corde Solis. As the king was at dinner in Westminster Hall, it thundered and lightened extremely. The cannons and the thunder played together." And Baxter, in his Life, mentions the same storm with reference to an earthquake that occurred at the coronation of Charles the First: "On April 23, 1661, was his majesty's coronation-day, the day being very serene and fair, till suddenly in the afternoon, as they were returning from Westminster Hall, there was very terrible thunder, when none expected it, which made me remember his father's coronation, on which, being a boy at school and having leave to play for the solemnity, an earthquake, about two o'clock in the afternoon, did affright the boys and all the neighbourhood. I intend no commentary," he notes, in conclusion, "but only to relate the matter of fact."

Sir Thomas Herbert seems to think that something of a supernatural character distinguished a journey he once made from the Isle of Wight to deliver "a gracious message," duly sealed up and directed to the Speaker of the House of Lords, pro tem., in London. Herbert had "much ado" to cross the sea from Cowes to Southampton; but the king, prisoned at Carisbrook, had ordered haste, so that the letter might be delivered before the House rose. No delay, therefore, was suffered, and, being landed, he immediately took post for London. But at a certain stage, "the postmaster, a malevolent person, having notice that the pacquet came from the king, and required extraordinary speed, mounted Mr. Herbert upon a horse that had neither good eyes nor feet, so as he usually stumbled very much, which, with the deep ways (being winter) and dark nights, in all probability might have abated his speed, but (through God's goodness) the horse (though at his full gallop most part of that twelve miles' riding) neither stumbled, nor fell, which at the next stage was admired."

Herbert also narrates a curious and ominous incident which happened at Hurst Castle, Hants, during the king's sojourn there, as a prisoner on his road to London. "The room he usually eat in was neither light nor lightsome; at noonday (in that winter season) requiring candles, and at night he had his wax-lamp set, as formerly, in a silver bason, which illuminated his bed-chamber . . . . The late Earl of Lindsey, being one of the gentlemen of his majesty's bed-chamber, one night lying on a pallate by the king's bedside (not long before his leaving Oxford and going thence to the Scots) at the foot thereof (as was usual every night) was placed a lamp or round cake of wax, in a silver bason, set upon a stool; the earl, awaking in the night, observed the room to be perfectly dark, and therefore raising himself up, looked towards the lamp, and concluded that it might be extinguished by some water got into the bason by some crack; but not hearing the king stir he forbore rising, or to call upon those that lay in the next chamber to bring in another light, fearing to disturb the king's rest; and about an hour after that he fell asleep again, and awakened not till morning; but when he did awake he discerned the lamp bright burning, which so astonished him that, taking the boldness to call to the king (whom he heard, by his stirring, to be awake), he told him what he had observed; whereupon the king replied, that he himself, awakening also in the night, took notice that all was dark, and, to be fully satisfied, he put by the curtain to look at the lamp; but, some time after, he found it light, and concluded the earl was risen, and had set it upon the bason lighted again. The earl assured his majesty he had not. The king then said, he did consider it a prognostic of God's future favour and mercy towards him or his; that, although he was at that time eclipsed, yet either he or they might shine out bright again." It will be observed that there is really nothing more in this story than the commonplace incident of a lamp's burning for a while so feebly that the flame was judged to have expired, and of its presently reviving and shining brightly; but two hundred years ago prognostics were held to lurk in very trifling matters.

The execution of the king, as the historians relate, produced an extraordinary effect upon the nation. No doubt there was profound emotion, but it is difficult to believe with Hume that children came prematurely into the world; that men and women "fell into convulsions or sank into such a melancholy as attended them to their graves; and that some, unmindful of themselves, as though they could not or would not survive their beloved prince, suddenly fell down dead."

A certain mystery has obscured the ultimate fate of Bernini's bust. It was supposed to have perished during the burning of Whitehall in 1697. But had it been permitted to remain there during the Civil War and the Protectorate? Those were iconoclastic times. There had been great destruction of royal property. All Charles's art treasures had been promptly brought to the hammer. The pictures, jewels, plate, and furniture of nineteen palaces had been hurriedly sold by auction, producing only one hundred and eighteen thousand pounds. The equestrian statue of the king, now to be seen at Charing Cross, was only preserved by being buried furtively by its purchaser, a loyal brazier, John Rivet by name, living at the Dial, near Holborn Conduit. Was Cromwell likely to preserve as an ornament of his palace the bust of his royal predecessor? Vertue was of opinion that the bust had certainly survived the Commonwealth, and probably also the fire. Sir John Stanley, the deputy chamberlain at the period of the fire, believed that the bust had been stolen some time before the palace was in flames. Sir John was dining in Craig-court, when the fire began at three o'clock in the afternoon. He ran to the palace and perceived only at that time some smoke issuing from a garret of one of the minor buildings. He found Sir Christopher Wren there with his workmen, and the gates all shut. Pointing to the bust he begged Sir Christopher to take care of that and the statues. Sir Christopher replied, "Take care of what you are concerned in, and leave the rest to me." It was not until five hours afterwards that the fire reached that portion of the building. But though the ruins were dug up, and the strictest search made, no fragment of marble was ever discovered. A marble figure of a crouching Venus in the same chamber was known to have been stolen; it was recovered by the Crown four years later. But of Bernini's bust no trace could be found; nothing more was ever heard.

Evil omens attended the commencement of the Long Parliament in 1641. The sceptre fell from the hands of the wooden figure of King Charles which adorned Sir Thomas Trenchard's hall at Wullich in Dorset, as the family were at dinner in the parlour; Justice Hunt being one of the party, and confirming the truth of the story. And the picture of Archbishop Laud, which hung in his own closet, fell down, the string having snapped. The accident had nothing especially rare about it; but, happening when it did, was deemed portentous.

At King Charles's trial, the head of his staff or walking-cane fell off; "this, by some, was looked upon as a bad omen," writes Sir Thomas Herbert. Previously, when the high court of justice was voted in the Parliament House, as Berkenhead (the mace-bearer) took up the mace to carry it before the speaker, the top fell off, the fact being avowed to Aubrey "by an eye-witness then in the house."

A similar accident is said to have occurred at the coronation of James the Second. The top of his sceptre, the "fleur de lis," fell to the ground; and at that precise moment the royal standard, hoisted at the Tower amid the roar of cannon upon a signal given from Westminster Abbey, was so torn by the furious wind then blowing, that half of the flag was carried away into the Thames. Nor were these all the omens that were noted at the enthronement of James. The peers, who, in pursuance of ancient custom, were required to salute their new sovereign, discharged that duty with such clumsy zeal that "the crown was almost kissed from his head. An earl did set it right; and as he came from the abbey to Westminster hall, the crown tottered extremely." Meanwhile the canopy of cloth of gold, carried over the king's head by the wardens of the Cinque Ports, was so rent by the wind as he passed from the abbey to the hall, that it hung down very lamentably. "I saw it," notes Aubrey. The fireworks which were to be exhibited on the Thames in celebration of the event, suddenly exploded with alarming violence; "several spectators leaped into the river, choosing rather to be drowned than burned." In a yard on the bank of the river stood the coach and horses of my Lord Powys. "The horses were so frightened by the fireworks that the coachman was not able to stop them, but ran over one who with great difficulty recovered." The serious loss of life that occurred in Paris when the city was illuminated, and a grand display of fireworks exhibited, in celebration of the marriage of Louis the Sixteenth and

Marie Antoinette, might also be regarded as ominous—especially by those whose presentiments and predictions may be said to take an ex post facto form.

There were further evil omens noted in connection with the unfortunate James. When he was at Salisbury, in 1688, an iron crown upon the turret of the council-house was blown off. "This," says Aubrey, "has been often confidently asserted by persons who were then living." And when he first entered Dublin, after his arrival from France, in 1689, one of the gentlemen that bore the mace before him, stumbled, "without any rub in his way, or other visible occasion." But somehow the mace fell out of his hand, and the little cross upon the crown thereof stuck fast between two stones in the street. "This is very well-known all over Ireland, and did much trouble king James himself, with many of his chief attendants."

Crowns, and crosses, and flags seem indeed to have been very liable to the kind of misadventure that obtains ominous reputation. Colonel Sharington informed Aubrey that when Charles the First raised his standard upon the top of the tower at Nottingham, "the wind blew it so the first night, that it hung down almost horizontal; which some did take to be an ill omen." So it was regarded with misgiving, when the cross that was wont to be carried before Cardinal Wolsey fell out of its socket, "and was like to have knocked the brains out of one of the bishop's servants. A very little while after came in a messenger, and arrested the cardinal before he could get out of the house."

Among coronation omens may be numbered the sudden darkness that occurred during the enthronement of William and Mary. This enabled the adherents of the Stuart cause, so tradition records, to take up the champion's gage, and fling down a gauntlet in its place, to challenge the title of the king and queen to the crown they had assumed. Similar legends, we may note, pertain to the coronation ceremonies of all the kings of the house of Hanover, so long as there remained a Stuart claimant of the throne. Sir Walter Scott has availed himself of a fable of this kind in his novel of Redgauntlet.

A "trivial prophesy," touching the kings and queens, and the prosperity of England, has been preserved by the great Lord Bacon, who heard it when he was a child, and Queen Elizabeth "in the flower of her years."

When Hempe is spun
England's done.

"Whereby, it was generally conceived that after the princes had reigned, which had the principal letters of that word Hempe (which were Henry, Edward, Mary, Philip, and Elizabeth), England should come to utter confusion, which is verified in the change of the name; for that the king's style is now no more of England but of Britain."

It is told of King William the Fourth that he much preferred his second name, Henry, and wished to be styled King Henry the Ninth, to establish his lawful right to a title which had been assumed by the Cardinal of York, the last of the Stuarts. The Privy Council discussed the question, but decided in favour of his being called King William. The king informed Miss Helen Lloyd, the governess of his younger children, that this decision had been mainly influenced by regard for an old prophecy, of which he had not previously heard, but which ran:

Henry the Eighth pulled down monks and their cells,
Henry the Ninth should pull down bishops and their bells.

The king did not know where this prediction or proverb was to be found. It has been proved, however, to be of ancient date, being contained in Sir John Harrington's Brief View of the State of the Church of England, written for the use of Prince Henry (the eldest son of James the First), and published in the year 1653.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LIX.

THERE was a momentary rustling, as if every person present had moved slightly, and then a deep hush. The silence seemed to last a long time; but, in fact, only a second or two elapsed before Powell, drawing up his tall lean figure to its utmost height, and pointing with outstretched hand full at Algernon, exclaimed with a kind of cry, "There is her murderer! Woe to the cruel, woe to the unrighteous man! Ye have ploughed wickedness; ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies!"

There arose a murmur, a movement, a confused sound of ejaculations. Algernon started up, and some one laid a hand on his shoulder and pushed him back into his seat. "Ask what he means," said Algernon; but his voice was so weak and faint that the words were not heard beyond the few persons who immediately surrounded him. He could scarcely grow paler than he had been from the beginning of the inquest, but a ghastly ashen-grey hue showed itself round his mouth. His lips were quite colourless. Terror, agonising terror, was in his heart. What did this preacher know? What had he seen? Had Castalia spoken and accused him before her death?

Anguish for anguish; perhaps he suffered at that moment as much as his victim had suffered when she felt the hand she loved send her to her death!

The movement and the murmur in the crowd were over in an instant. The coroner sternly commanded order. There was silence again, and the very air seemed charged with a horrible apprehension, which weighed upon every one as a coming thunderstorm oppresses the cowering birds.

"You must speak clearly and plainly, Mr. Powell," said the coroner in a severe tone. "State what grounds you have for this very extraordinary accusation. The evidence laid before us to-day goes to show that Mr. Errington did not see his wife since parting from her on the Monday night to go to London, until he was called on to identify her dead body at Duckwell Farm."

"He spoke with her in the meadow by the river's brink. She appealed to him; I saw her [illegible]d him; she knelt to him. I [illegible] down the steep[illegible]. Then he hurled her into the water and fled away, leaving her to perish!"

A most profound sensation was caused by these words throughout the whole assembly. The jury looked at each other like men suddenly aroused from sleep. They seemed not only startled but scared. Indeed, a singular expression of disquietude appeared on every face—almost as if each individual in the crowd had felt himself accused. Before any further questions could be put to Powell, there was a stir and a commotion at the lower end of the room and a murmur of voices. Algernon Errington had swooned dead away. He must have fallen to the ground had he not been caught in the arms of his next neighbour, who happened to be Mr. Ravell, the draper. Some one in the crowd handed a smelling-bottle to be held under his nose, and they cleared a little space around him to give him air, by the directions of Mr. Smith, the surgeon, who was at hand. It was proposed to carry him away out of the heat and the throng; but in less than a couple of minutes he revived, and immediately on recovering consciousness he desired to remain where he was. The terror of listening to what Powell said was not so appalling to his imagination, as the terror of fancying what he might be saying, when he (Algernon) should not be there to hear it.

Order being restored, the preacher's examination was continued. On being asked where he had been when the circumstances alleged to have taken place happened, he replied that he had been at some distance up the river, in the midst of a thick coppice which grew low down on the bank there. He had been near enough to see, although not to hear, the interview between young Errington and his wife. And to the questions what had brought him to that remote spot at such an hour, and why he did not make his presence known at once on seeing the deceased lady fall into the water, he answered, waving his hands to and fro, "I was prostrate on the earth—not praying, I may not pray, but suffering under the wrath of the powers of the air. The voices were very terrible on that day. They had aroused me from my bed. They had hunted me forth in the early morning. I had wandered for a long time—for hours, after your reckoning, but for years according to the time of the spirits."

"Mr. Powell," said Dr. Evans, sternly, "this will not do. You must speak less wildly. Remember what a tremendous responsibility rests on you after making such an allegation as you have made! Answer the questions put to you clearly and seriously."

But it was in vain that David Powell was catechised and cross-examined, in the endeavour to draw from him any more definite account of the events of that last morning of Castalia's life. He reiterated, indeed, his statement that Algernon had wilfully and forcibly thrust his wife down the bank into the river, and had then fled away at his utmost speed. And he added that he (Powell) had no thought of pursuing or calling to the murderer, being absorbed in his attempts to rescue the drowning woman. He persisted, too, in declaring that Castalia had been willing, nay, wishful, to die. She had not struggled. She had not cried out. She had not tried to reach his outstretched hand. She had closed her eyes, and given herself up to the power of the death-cold waters. So far he was coherent and consistent; but when he endeavoured to describe how or why he had found himself on that spot at that hour, he wandered off into the wildest statements, and grew ever more and more excited. His face flushed. His eyes blazed. His voice rose almost to a scream. He broke into a torrent of words, standing up in face of the crowd and emphasising his discourse with strange violent gestures. "I will declare the truth," he exclaimed. "I will cry aloud, and spare not. Now, therefore be content; look upon me, for it is evident unto you if I lie!" Then with a sudden change of tone, sinking his voice to a hoarse, hollow monotone, and gazing straight before him with wide, horror-stricken eyes, he added, "Let me speak, let me confess the truth, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death. A land of darkness as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

A shudder ran through the audience. The preacher seemed to hold them in a spell. No voice was raised to interrupt him. Many persons turned pale as they listened. But on one face in the crowd the colour faintly dawned again. In one breast the preacher's voice giving utterance to the awful and glowing imagery of the Hebrew of old time, awoke something like a sensation of relief and comfort. Algernon Errington felt the life-blood pulsing warmly again in his veins. This Methodist man was mad—clearly mad! What was his testimony worth?

Powell went on, speaking still more brokenly and incoherently. "I am a castaway," he said. "I declare it before you all. Some of you have listened to my ministrations in other days. I spoke then of assurance—of Christian perfection. Those words were vain. There are but the elect and the reprobate, and unto the number of those latter am I doomed. I have long known it and struggled against the knowledge, but I declare it to ye now as a testimony."

The coroner recovered his presence of mind. In truth he had been so absorbed in studying David Powell with the professional interest of a doctor and a psychologist, that he had suffered him to ramble on thus far unchecked. But now he broke in upon him abruptly. "We cannot listen to this sort of thing, Mr. Powell," he said. "All this has no bearing on the present inquiry." Then he said a few words as to the desirability of an adjournment. Mr. Errington might wish to call some other witnesses. Powell had acknowledged that he had been too far distant to hear a word of the conversation he alleged to have taken place between the husband and wife. It was possible, therefore, that he had been too distant to see the two persons, with sufficient distinctness to swear to their identity. Some more particular testimony might be obtained as to the precise hour at which the deceased lady had been last seen alive, and as to what her husband had been doing at that time. Upon this, Algernon Errington arose in his place and said in a clear, though slightly tremulous voice, "For myself, I desire no adjournment. But I should like to put a few questions to this witness."

There was a sudden hush of profound attention. David Powell still stood up in face of the assembly. He was rocking himself to and fro in a singular, restless way, and muttering under his breath very rapidly. It was observable, too, that his eyes seemed continually attracted to one point in the room just behind Algernon Errington. Every now and then he passed his hands over his eyes, as if to obliterate, or shut out, some painful sight, but he did not turn his head away; and the next instant after making that gesture, he would stare at the same point again, with an expression of intense horror. Algernon waited for an instant before speaking. Then he said in such a tone as one uses to attract the attention of a very young child, "Mr. Powell, will you try to listen to me?"

The preacher immediately looked full at him, but without replying. Algernon did not meet his eye, but turned his face aside towards the coroner and the jury. He looked at them with an appealing glance, and a slight movement of his head in the direction of Powell. Then he resumed:

"The accusation you have brought against me is so overwhelming, so amazing, that it is not very wonderful if I feel almost stunned and dizzy. How such a notion ever entered your brain Heaven only knows! I deny it completely, unequivocally, solemnly. To me it seems that such a denial must be unnecessary. The thing is so monstrous! But will you try to answer one or two questions with some calmness? How long had you been in the copse before you saw my wife walking by the river-side?"

Powell shook his head restlessly, and passed his hand over his forehead with the action of brushing something off. "I was called out before the dawn," he said. "The voices bade me go forth. They sounded like brazen bells in the silence, beating and quivering here," and he pressed his fingers on his temples.

"You hear voices which are unheard by other people, then?"

"Often. Every day. Every hour."

"Tell me—do you not sometimes see forms that other persons cannot see?"

Powell started, trembled violently, and looked at Algernon with an expression of bewildered terror. But it was at the same time manifest that some gleam of reason was struggling against the delusions in his mind. He felt and perceived dimly, as one perceives external circumstances through sleep, that a trap was being laid for him. The pathetic questioning look in his eyes, as he vainly tried to recover the government of his mind, was intensely painful. For a second or two, he remained silent with parted lips and clenched hands, like a man making a violent and supreme effort. It seemed as if in another instant he might succeed in gaining sufficient mastery over himself to reply collectedly. But Algernon did not give time for such a chance to happen. He repeated his question more eagerly and loudly, looking at the preacher almost threateningly as he spoke.

"Tell me, Mr. Powell—and remember what a responsibility you have assumed in making this accusation—tell me truly whether you do not see visions—figures of men and women, that other people cannot see? Don't forms appear before your eyes and vanish again as suddenly? Have you not told your landlady, Mrs. Thimbleby, as much on many occasions? How can you dare to assert with confidence, that from the distance you say you were at, you could distinguish my face and that of my wife? All your description of her violent gestures, and kneeling on the ground, and clasping her hands—does not that seem more like the delusions of fancy than the information of your sober senses?"

Algernon spoke with indignant heat and rapidity—a calculated heat, a purposed rapidity meant to have a confusing effect on the preacher, and which had that effect; but which also excited a sympathetic indignation in many of the auditors. Powell looked wildly around him, and clasped his hands above his head.

"You must put one question at a time, Mr. Errington," said Dr. Evans.

"Then I put this question: David Powell, do you, or do you not, see visions and faces and figures that the rest of the world is as unconscious of, as of the voices that called you out on to Whitmeadow that morning that my poor wife was drowned?"

Powell, with his eyes still fixed on the same point that he had been gazing on so long, suddenly cried out with a loud voice, "As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit! God forbid that I should justify you! Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. It is there—there behind his shoulder. It has been holding me with the power of its eyes. Oh, how dreadful are those eyes, and that ashen-grey face! Look, behold! the Lord has brought a witness from the grave to testify to the truth. See, behold! Can you not see her? Look where she stands in her cold wet garments, with the water dripping from her hair! She points at him—oh most horrible!—the drowned woman points her cold finger at her murderer!" He stretched out his arms towards Algernon, and then with one bound leaped shrieking into the midst of the crowd.

A dozen hands were put forth to hold him. He struggled with the tremendous strength of insanity; but was at length forcibly carried out of the room a raving maniac.

After that there were not many words of an official nature spoken in the room. The inquest was adjourned to the following day, and the assembly dispersed to carry the account of the strange scene that had happened, all over Whitford and its neighbourhood.

NEXT WEEK WILL BE COMMENCED

A NEW SERIAL STORY.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD.

Author of "Never Forgotten," "The Second Mrs. Tillotson," &c. &c.

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GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK II. CHAPTER V. AUDREY'S NARRATIVE. MADELEINE KINDERSLEY.

"A FEW words of retrospect are necessary, it seems to me, at this point in my simple story, to explain why there had existed up to the epoch which it has reached, no intimacy between myself and the Kindersleys, though Mr. Kindersley and my father had been friends for several years, and my brother had gone into Mr. Kindersley's bank, instead of into Her Majesty's service. As a matter of fact, I hardly knew Madeleine Kindersley by sight, for her mother had made a point of not visiting anyone concerning whom the nice distinction of 'county' or not 'county' could be raised; and before the young lady had been sent abroad to complete her education, my opportunities of observing her were limited to her appearances at divine service in the handsome pew, which, among the humble seats in the parish church, was as Kindersley's bank among the commercial buildings of Wrottesley, and her occasional passings-by the Dingle House, in her mother's carriage, which eclipsed the equipage of Mrs. Delamere herself.

"Until Mrs. Kindersley died, it never had occurred to me that anyone's death could be otherwise than a cause of profound sorrow to everybody who was related to, or even acquainted with, the deceased person. The new light which penetrated my perceptions on that occasion was one of the distinctive, never-to-be-forgotten lessons of experience, after which one never feels quite the same again. Everybody was very decorous about it, and Mr. Kindersley was exemplary; but that nobody was really sorry, and that in some quarters the deceased lady was what Mrs. Gummidge styles 'a riddance,' was plain. Mrs. Kindersley was a handsome lady, of good family; and when she, who was undeniably 'county,' condescended to marry the banker, it was generally, but unfairly, imputed to the fact that her family had less to boast of in purse than in pedigree. It was not a happy marriage, though it had all the elements, save one, which are supposed to go to the making of happiness; that one was good temper on Mrs. Kindersley's part. I do not believe she was an ill-intentioned person in any way, but she succeeded as thoroughly in making everybody about her miserable, as if she had applied all her faculties to that end. It was understood that Mrs. Kindersley's pet peculiarity was an instinctive aversion to her husband's friends, and her favourite method of asserting her position was by strong opposition to the wishes of every member of her family, however blameless and reasonable those wishes were in themselves. These things I knew only through rumour, but I could see for myself that Madeleine Kindersley, for all her handsome dress, and fine carriage, did not look particularly happy. There were some stories about Clement Kindersley, the banker's only son—for in that house also the children were but two—which indicated that he was not disposed to be ruled by his mother's capricious government. Clement Kindersley was not a youth of promise. Among Mrs. Kindersley's 'ways' was the most accommodatingly delicate health possible. She invariably suffered from severe nervous headache, whenever it was within the bounds of probability that anyone might expect her to do anything not positively amusing; and anything like domestic opposition unfailingly resulted in her taking to her bed. These periods of retirement, which were disrespectfully called by the household, 'missus's fits of the sulks,' increased in frequency after Madeleine had been sent to a fine finishing-school at Paris, and it began to be believed that Mrs. Kindersley was really in delicate health. So well founded was this impression, that on a certain occasion, Mrs. Kindersley, having taken to her bed, did not leave it again alive; and then there came a temporary reaction of feeling about her on the part of the Wrottesley people, who said she had no doubt been a much more amiable person than was generally supposed, and that it was a great shame to have made so light of her ailments.

"Madeleine Kindersley remained at the finishing-school in Paris for some time after her mother's death, and, during that interval, the old friendship between Mr. Kindersley and my father found a practical expression in Griffith's appointment to a high stool in the bank, and the daily enjoyment of the society of Mr. Finlay, the cashier. This gentleman was the most colourless individual imaginable; I cannot think of any characteristic of his, except his excessive near-sightedness. Griffith was near-sighted, and, to my great annoyance, used glasses when he was reading of an evening and in business hours; but he was lynx-eyed in comparison with Mr. Finlay. Mr. Kindersley was a kindly-tempered, good-looking, middle-aged gentleman, with an habitual expression of anxiety in his face, and I had not spoken to him a dozen times in my life before the dinner-party at Lady Olive Despard's. But he had taken a good deal of notice of me on that occasion, which, however, had not led me to form any such expectations as had presented themselves to the sanguine fancy of Miss Minnie Kellett; and I had had leisure, among my numerous preoccupations, to observe that he seemed much more cheerful and talkative, than on the few former occasions when I had seen him.

"With these tedious, but not unnecessary remarks, I proceed to record a remarkable illustration, furnished by my experience, of the truth of the saying, 'It never rains but it pours.'

"I slipped upstairs to my room for a moment, to give my hair a touch with a brush and to take off my apron, and then I presented myself in the drawing-room, where I found my father and Mr. Kindersley standing with their backs to the fire, and Miss Kindersley making timid advances to Agrippa, my father's cat, who was a general household idol, and who received her attentions with roundabout acquiescence, not committing himself to any warm or decided friendship.

"I thought, with my first glance at her, that Mr. Lester was not so extravagantly wrong as he might have been in pronouncing Madeleine Kindersley beautiful. I acknowledged her to be so, much more heartily than on the evening of Lady Olive Despard's dinner-party. She faced me as I opened the door of the drawing-room, and looked up at me as she stooped over Agrippa, stroking his silken sides, with a most lovely smile.

"I had not cared particularly, up to that time, about my personal appearance. I did not fancy myself pretty; but I had a sort of notion that I was odd and clever-looking, and that to be so was better and more interesting. But, as I looked at Madeleine Kindersley, the fond and baseless illusion deserted me for ever. No oddity, no cleverness, in fact or appearance, could be better than such eyes and skin, such a form, such a colouring as hers. She was the very personification of youthful bloom and of girlish delicacy—a flower-like, poetical creature; as different from me as if we had not belonged to the same species in creation. Her manners had acquired ease and graciousness without artificiality; and the soft, girlish simplicity of her smile, her voice, and her movements had a captivating charm for me—all the more potent, no doubt, for its contrast with my own somewhat abrupt, unmannerly, and inconsiderate ways. She rose and held out a hand, beside which mine was like a brown paw; and Mr. Kindersley came towards me, in his ceremonious but good-natured way.

"'Madeleine has lost no time in renewing her acquaintance with you, Miss Dwarris,' he said. 'Except to the Court, this is her first visit.'

"'You are very kind,' I said, with painfully conscious awkwardness; and Mr. Kindersley turned towards my father again, and resumed his conversation with him, leaving Madeleine and myself to surmount the difficulties of first acquaintance without assistance. This was readily done, aided, as we respectively were, by strong curiosity, and the slight interest which each had aroused in the other on the occasion of our only previous meeting. Presently my father and Mr. Kindersley went away to my father's room;—and we were left together, to grow momentarily more intimate and unrestrained.

"Small as the Dingle House was in comparison with Beech Lawn, Mr. Kindersley's handsome residence, which was three miles beyond Wrottesley, and also on the northern road, and insignificant as were all my belongings in comparison with those of the banker's daughter, everything in my home was novel to her, and after the fashion of girls, she was curious about it all. The shyness common to our mutual strangeness subsided very soon. I think I recovered from it first, being more accustomed to independence, and having the advantage of being on my own ground. Miss Kindersley told me that she had very few acquaintances, and no friends, and that her father hoped she and I should 'suit each other.' Here was something to increase my self-importance, to make me think myself somebody! Here was a second edition of my unknown uncle Pemberton, and my unknown cousin Ida—a further expansion of the narrow horizon of my life!

"We talked over the dinner-party at Lady Olive Despard's, and the people who were there, I remember, with one exception. Madeleine did not mention Mr. Lester to me, and I did not introduce his name into our conversation. I confess that I felt it a mean thing on my part to suppress it, considering the admiration of her which Mr. Lester had expressed to Miss Minnie Kellett; but she evidently took no interest in him, and I hardly knew her well enough yet to repeat a personal compliment. She thought Lord Barr very pleasant and good-natured, and she was quite enthusiastic about Lady Olive.

"'Poor mamma knew her very well,' said Madeleine, 'and she has been very kind since I came home.'

"This was a subject which never aroused enthusiasm on my part, and I answered so coldly that Miss Kindersley looked surprised. I came out with my reasons with my usual frankness, or imprudence. I thought Lady Olive liked to have influence over people, and to impose her own ideas upon them; and I did not care for that sort of thing. I forget how Madeleine answered; with some gentle deprecation, no doubt. The next theme which was started between us was that of our respective brothers. They were, in reality, the source of the present commencement of relations between us; and the young man whose life Griffith had saved from the river, and whose person he had subsequently, on many occasions during his school career, protected from the fists of his school-fellows, was Madeleine's only brother, as Griffith was mine. Here, however, all resemblance ceased. Clement Kindersley was as unlike my brother as Madeleine was unlike me, and he did not interest me in the least. I had often seen him about with Griffith, though he was not a frequent visitor at the Dingle House, and he had never attracted me. He was like his sister—too like, considering the difference of sex; but the delicacy of feature, which, in her case, constituted beauty, made him merely that detestable creature, a pretty young man; and the expression of her face was timid and artless, whereas the expression of his was sly and distrustful. Clement Kindersley was thin and delicate-looking, and even in his affection for Griffith, and his clinging to him, there was something weak and dependent, at variance with the manliness without which no physical beauty or intellectual accomplishment could, at any time, have had any charm for me.

"Thus, though Madeleine Kindersley and I discussed our respective brothers, we did not do so on equal grounds. I really could not be actually interested in or enthusiastic about Clement Kindersley; but his sister plainly did not mind my vague manner of treating the subject, and it dawned upon me as being just possible that she herself did not care very vehemently about her brother. She seemed, I thought, rather anxious to find out what Griffith thought of Clement—whether he considered him steady, and how much the two young men saw of each other.

"'I have been so long away from home,' said Madeleine, a little nervously, 'and I really know so little of boys—or, I ought to say, young men: Clement would be furious if he knew I called him a boy—that I can't judge whether he is going on well. Of course, papa thinks a great deal of him; and, of course, Clement thinks a great deal of himself—that's natural, I suppose; but it is not evidence, you know.'

"I did not want to let Clement Kindersley's sister perceive that my prepossessions were not in his favour; so I answered, in general terms, that our brothers were 'great friends,' and that Griffith thought Clement very clever, but did not think he had much taste for business.

"'No, that's just it,' said Madeleine; 'he has not, and it must be such a disappointment to papa. He is so proud of the bank, you know; he has been so content with it all his life; and now he sees that Clement doesn't take to it—that he doesn't take to anything, in fact. I don't really know what his notions about himself and his future are.'

"I did not know either, but I suspected that my father and Griffith regarded Mr. Kindersley as very much to be pitied on account of his son, and considered that young gentleman unlikely to 'come to good.' But I was not so devoid of tact as to divulge that opinion to my visitor; so I produced certain second-hand generalities which I had picked up, respecting the common fate of parents, in finding their sons indifferent to the matters which most deeply interested themselves, and turned the conversation to the more congenial theme of Griffith.

"I have no doubt I romanced a little in describing my life with my brother. There was a spice of temptation in the contrast between my own lot and that of Madeleine Kindersley in this particular, and I yielded to it.

"By the time that my father's conference with Mr. Kindersley was concluded, and that gentleman reappeared and took his daughter away, Madeleine and I had made a considerable advance towards friendship. I liked her, and she seemed to like me, in her quiet way. Something new and pleasant had come into my life. I walked with our visitors to the garden-gate. Mr. Kindersley and his daughter had come to the Dingle House on foot, and I could not help wondering what Mrs. Kindersley would have thought of so undignified a proceeding on the occasion of a first visit. I took leave of them there, after having received a very kind invitation from Mr. Kindersley to dine at Beech Lawn a few days later. Hitherto I had never seen the inside of the house. I looked after the father and daughter, as they walked away together, with a strong sense of the companionship between them, and a feeling of pity for the dead woman who was so little missed or mourned. I would rather not have believed that Madeleine Kindersley was better without her mother than with her; but I had to believe it; and the necessity taught me, more than many sermons could have taught me, of the truths of human life and character. 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again.' What stores of love and self-sacrifice, of devotion and well-doing, had Mrs. Kindersley meted out in her time to those of her household, so that they should hold her in perpetual and loving memory? What was to be the measure of their remembrance and their grief?

"Before Madeleine returned from the Parisian finishing-school—which deserved support if it had really had much to do with the simple grace of her manners and the cultivated refinement of her mind—Mr. Kindersley's aspect had been sufficiently grave and careworn to give him credit for grief of the most orthodox kind and depth; but I instinctively referred his gravity and gloom to disquiet concerning his son. Clement Kindersley was not much talked about at the Dingle House, but I knew, somehow, that he was doing badly, disappointing his father, discrediting his friends, and displeasing Griffith. I did not happen to like him, or it is possible I might have regarded him as an injured victim, when certain rumours about him reached me indirectly. Girls at my then age are sometimes foolishly disposed to feel interest and curiosity in 'wild' young men. They would feel neither, but very profound disgust instead, if they had any notion of the meaning of 'wildness.' I had no notion on the subject; but as I did not like the only 'wild' young man with whom I had any acquaintance, my ignorance was not perilous to me.

"I once asked Griffith—it was before Madeleine's return—whether he and Clement continued to be as good friends as they had formerly been; and he answered, shortly:

"'There's a great difference between boys and men. Clement is a man now, and the head partner's only son, you must remember.'

"I had heard a good deal after that, but as it could only have annoyed Griffith to have it repeated, I said nothing about it.

"I remembered these things as I re-entered the house, and took up a book, in anything but an attentive mood, after Madeleine Kindersley's visit. I remembered, also, how Miss Minnie Kellett had irritated me by one of her characteristic speeches, on the day when Griffith first went to the bank.

"'Dear me! It's almost a consolation for your brother's not going into the army, to think that you will be quite intimate with the bank family in future,' was the sympathetic utterance of Miss Minnie; and how it had vexed me!

"Here was the proposed inauguration of the predicted intimacy, and I was glad of it. My undisciplined youthful pride was conquered by the natural liking for companionship, the natural admiration for Madeleine, which I was not mean enough to suppress—though I did not see any occasion for so very vehement an expression of it as Mr. Lester's—and by the delightful sense of novelty.

"When Griffith came in, I had quite a budget of news for him, and, with my customary inconsistency, I talked myself into a state of enthusiasm about Miss Kindersley's good looks, which fully equalled that in which I supposed Mr. Lester to be.

"'And she must be wonderfully unlike her mother,' I remember saying, 'for she is not a bit conceited or ill-natured. I am sure you will be delighted with her, and she means to come and see me very often.'

"'That will be very nice for you,' said Griffith; 'but I am not likely to profit much by it; for, of course, she will be here when I shall be at the bank.'

"'Ah, but you are to see her,' I answered, triumphantly. 'Mr. Kindersley has asked us to dine at Beech Lawn on Thursday, you and I; you know he said he was well aware there was no use in trying to induce papa to dine out, and I am so glad. It will be ever so much better fun than Despard Court.'

"'Despard Court is very good fun.'

"'But Lady Olive's quite an old woman in comparison with girls like us. We mean to be such friends, Griffith.'

"'I am very glad to hear it. Has Miss Kindersley put our unknown cousin out of your head?'

"'Rather, I think. But then she will not be here for a long time. Is it not strange that a little while ago I had no friends—no particular friends of my own, I mean, for I don't count the Lipscotts, they are too much taken up with themselves and each other—and now I have at least the chance of two.'

"I am sure I was perfectly happy in those days, and that I had no morbid notions of any kind. I never called my life monotonous, or so thought of it, even in that innermost retreat of human perversity and ingratitude—my inmost heart; but the sense of change was grateful, even delightful, to me. Like the faint stir and odour of spring in the early year, there came to me some music and perfume of added vitality; new interests and ideas. Not that I recognised those fine things in my own feelings, or occupied myself at all with analysing them. Indeed my thoughts speedily centred themselves upon the grand question of whether I could or could not have a new dress—it was called a 'frock' in those days in quiet behind-the-time Wrottesley — for Miss Kindersley's dinner-party. It had not come into my head to wish for one wherewith to inaugurate my first entrance into grown-up dinner company at Despard Court; I had been perfectly satisfied with the white muslin gown I had worn at the Lipscotts', divested of its flower trimmings, and simply adorned with a sash. But my ideas were enlarging; I had dreamed of London since then, had a glimpse of luxury in the image of my unknown cousin and the person of Madeleine Kindersley, and my self-importance had received a decided accession.

"The consultation with Frosty, to which I speedily resorted, did not result favourably to my wishes. Mrs. Frost was a wise woman, and she viewed the 'frock' question in more than one aspect.

"'It isn't as you didn't ought to have it, Miss Audrey,' she said, shaking her head gravely; 'nor yet as your pa would make objections; but, you see, there's policy in all things, whatever you may think. Now, it's never sensible to begin with people any how but the way you mean to go on with them, and you can't go on dressing like Miss Kindersley, you know.'

"'But,' I objected, 'I don't think of such a thing. I don't want to dress like Miss Kindersley; of course I know that would be absurd. I only want a new gown for the first time I go to Beech Lawn.'

"'I wouldn't have it, my dear,' said Frosty, earnestly; 'not that I don't want you to look as nice as anybody; but there's nobody quicker than rich people to see anything extravagant, and'— going back to her first point—'if you're going to be up at Beech Lawn constant, you'd much better begin as you mean to go on.'

"I yielded to Frosty's judgment, arrayed myself for my first appearance at Beech Lawn in the white gown which had already done duty on the two 'grown-up' occasions of my life, and was rewarded by finding Madeleine Kindersley almost as plainly dressed as myself, when Griffith and I were ushered into the drawing-room at Beech Lawn on the following Thursday. How pretty she looked in the well-warmed, well-lighted, handsome room, and how prettily she received us, with that attractive mixture of timidity and ease which lent her manner a peculiar charm, which I have never seen in that of any other person!

"Beech Lawn was not a very extensive place, but it was beautifully kept, and the gardens were lovely. They constituted the sole hobby of Mr. Kindersley, outside his business. The house was substantial, well built, commodious, and furnished with a degree of sumptuousness entirely novel to my experience—which indeed was very limited. I should have found occupation and amusement enough for the whole of my first evening there, only in examining the pictures, the china, the ornaments of the drawing-room, and the delightful little boudoir beyond it, which Madeleine called her 'nest.' The young mistress of such a house had something enviable in her destiny, and all the more so as she was independent in her rule. Mr. Kindersley was of the same mind as my father with respect to keeping the family circle unbroken, and had resisted all the well-meant advice which urged him to provide his daughter with a companion. He hoped, he said, in reply to counsel on this point, that he and Madeleine would be company for each other; and he believed Madeleine would best fulfil her responsibilities if she had to face them unassisted. So, the banker's daughter was as happy as a princess, and as free as air, according to my summing up of her position.

"It was a pleasant little party, and I enjoyed it very much. No one who interested me particularly was there, and I had not much private talk with Madeleine, who had to attend to two married ladies among her guests. Clement Kindersley did not make his appearance—a circumstance which caused me no regret, and his sister but little surprise, if one may judge by the careless tone in which she said to her father, when the number of the party was complete, with the exception of her brother:

"'We don't wait for Clement, I suppose?'

"After Mr. Kindersley had answered in the negative by a shake of the head, he approached Griffith and spoke to him. I did not hear what was said by either; but I fancied that Mr. Kindersley inquired of Griffith whether he knew anything of Clement's whereabouts, and that my brother told him that he had not seen him. A shade passed over the banker's face, and he sighed.

"We had some music in the evening; and I found that Madeleine Kindersley was a real proficient in the art. She sang beautifully, in a rich contralto voice, and with perfect taste. Griffith sang two or three duets with her, and their voices harmonised delightfully. I wished my father could have heard them. The distance between the Dingle House and Beech Lawn rendered it necessary for Griffith and me to have a fly to take and bring us back. My brother had been talkative enough on our way to Beech Lawn, but he was silent and preoccupied as we drove back, and gave me so many monosyllabic answers to my questions, that I gave up asking them at length, and sagely concluded that he was thinking about Clement Kindersley."

A MAHOMMEDAN REFORMER.

At the present moment, when all religions are labouring in the throes of reform, every phase is of interest. More especially is this the case, when news reaches us of internal changes in a religion so stationary in character as that of Islam. One of the salient features of Christianity consists in its capability for progress, while the distinctive feature of Mahommedanism is its letter worship and formalism. The reiteration of Koran texts, coupled with a blind superstitious obedience to its laws, suffices to ensure the true believer's welfare. Gross ignorance and stupidity, mental slothfulness and jesuitical evasion of the spirit of the prophetic commands, are unhappily the concomitants of such a system, and hinder the creed of Islam from realising Carlyle's verdict, that the "religion of Mahomet is a kind of Christianity." Yet even rigid Islamism has experienced faint pulsation of the modern restlessness, and this most stereotyped of all forms has given forth signs of renewed life and vigour. It is in Southern Arabia this movement is most remarkable, and is due in great measure to the exertions of a reformer named Hadschi Wekkes.

Probably few travellers passing through Aden, en route for India, have ever heard of the existence of this sage; certainly no one but the Freiherr Heinrich von Maltzan has, to our knowledge, ever mentioned him among their Arabian recollections. This distinguished traveller's observations have been unusually minute and fortunate. He has been one of the most energetic of Eastern explorers, and his labours have been particularly directed towards the little-known regions of Southern Arabia. His perfect knowledge of the Arab tongue permitted him to converse freely with the natives, while his acquaintance with their manners and customs enabled him to accomplish a pilgrimage to Mecca, in the disguise of a Mussulman. He was discovered before visiting Medina, and forced to fly from the fury of the populace. Since then, until his recent death, Maltzan lived principally at Algiers, only undertaking smaller journeys, of all which he has left interesting accounts. He does not relate how and when he first became acquainted with Hadschi Wekkes; but their intercourse appears to have been of an intimate character, since the sage voluntarily told him the whole story of his life.

Hadschi Wekkes was born in an obscure village, pitched amid the sandy steppes of Southern Arabia. His parents were poor, the child was put to tend sheep, and consequently had not time to resort to school, where his reasoning powers would have been deadened, and where he would merely have learnt some chapters of the Koran. Possessing an open mind, vivid phantasy, and intelligent curiosity, the boy taught himself many useful lessons during his long solitary rambles after his sheep. The wish to learn was awakened in his heart, but he did not know where to apply for instruction. Then there came to him rumours concerning a wise man living somewhere among the mountains. How to get at him was the problem. The boy reflected that pasture would be at least as plentiful on the heights of the hills as at their base, where his sheep grazed daily. What hindered him from leading them to browse on these heights? His family would not wonder at his absence so long as the sheep were well tended, and of their well-being any mountain dweller descending into the plain could report. So one day he carried his plan into execution, and proceeded to ascend Mount Sabber, one of the loftiest of the South Arabian heights, on which he learnt the wise man had taken up his abode.

Three days were required to drive his little flock to the summit, a journey keenly enjoyed by the young shepherd, to whom a totally new world was revealed. He revelled in the splendours of nature, beheld for the first time; the tall trees, the luscious green foliage, the bright-coloured flowers. So deeply did these impressions sink into his soul, that many years after he wrought them all into a graceful poem.

At last the summit was reached; and the boy was amazed, enraptured, at the sight that greeted his eyes. A blooming green vale spread before him, through which flowed a limpid brook. Traversing this, he soon found himself in the midst of trees. It was the first forest he had ever seen, and he did not know the trees, for none such grew in the valley. The scent of their leaves was delicious, and pierced his brain like an aroma from heaven. It nearly entranced him without causing a state of dull, heavy insensibility, like the odour of intoxicating opiates. It was more like a soft delicate mist that slightly veiled the senses, without robbing perception and reason of any of their power.

This wood, with its wondrous influence upon the senses, recalled to mind something Hadschi Wekkes had heard in early boyhood. An old man, a narrator of fairy tales, sojourned for some time in his native village. One of his favourite stories was about a forest in which grew odorous trees laden with delicious fruits. Their branches supported, all in one season, buds, blossoms, and berries. The flowers, of a hyacinth form, were of many colours, from pale red and golden yellow to light blue. Their aspect utterly fascinated the beholder, and tempted him to pluck their aromatic chalices, whilst the red juice which occasionally dropped from the fruits when over-ripeness had torn their covering, invited him to a sweet repast. Yet this enjoyment was not easy of attainment; nay, the greatest danger threatened him who attempted to procure it, for the trunk of each tree was encircled by a gold-glittering snake, that stretched out a fiery head and greedy tongue to every new-comer. Most people turned back at this sight, but some courageous spirits, thinking this kind of snake was harmless, ventured to approach the trees. They were instantly bitten, and fell back horror-stricken. Nor was their terror groundless, for, in truth, the bite was fatal to the audacious meddler. Nevertheless, some few survived to enjoy the luscious fruits, but these favoured few were not the cold men of reason who were only capable of doubting that the serpent's bite was venomous; they were the warm glowing hearts, who, filled with ardent yearning after the fruits, heeded not their wounds, but plucked the berries, and eat them in spite of their pain. Now in these berries was the poison's cure, and likewise the capacity of inexpressible happiness.

In after years this fable was expounded to the lad. The fruit was Wisdom; the serpent's bite, the erring thoughts of the brain. The former can only be obtained if we have bravely combatted the latter, and have not succumbed to their deadly influence.

Suddenly Hadschi Wekkes saw a human being among the trees. It was a young girl, plucking leaves. He went up and accosted her, having heard that freer customs prevail among the mountain inhabitants, where a man may speak to women. She looked surprised at his appearance; he, too, was struck with hers, for she was whiter than any woman he had ever seen.

"What do you do with those leaves?" he asked.

She gave no reply, but put one in her mouth, and began to chew it.

"Are these leaves food for man?" he asked again.

"They are not food," she answered, "they cheer the heart."

Then Hadschi Wekkes perceived that these were the Kaat leaves which brighten the mind, without harming the body. Down in the valley, Kaat leaves are only to be purchased with gold, and none but the rich can partake of them, while here the delicious indulgence was accessible to all.

"You mountain dwellers must be a happy people," he said.

"Come with me and judge for yourself," replied the girl.

They walked on together, and soon came upon pretty little houses that peeped out from amidst a green and shady grove. Every wall was clad with vines, heavily laden fruit-trees stood in the gardens, under whose shade sprawled huge melons. Water was abundant. Hadschi Wekkes thought to behold a Paradise. As they passed one of the larger houses, the girl uttered a shrill call, whereupon many boys and girls came trooping out, who gazed at the sunburnt stranger in wonderment.

"Whence comes this brown boy?" they asked; for they were all as white as the girl he had met.

The boys were bold, and inclined to be rude. When he noticed this, he proposed to fight them, and did beat a few, after which they grew more friendly. The girls were all kind. Two sisters of his companion took possession of Hadschi Wekkes, and led him to their parents, who received him with much cordiality. They gave him the Lokma (salt and bread) at once, so that they instantly became his sworn friends, and he theirs.

This was Hadschi Wekkes's first acquaintance with a mountain village. His new friends pressed him to remain among them, and tried to discourage his burning desire to find the holy man.

"This Abdallah is a heretic," they said; "he does not read the Koran, nor believe implicitly all the words spoken by the prophet. Nay, he even contends that there are doctrines without the creed of Islam which are worthy of regard. He holds in some strange way that the knowledge of Allah can be obtained in Nature."

Such accounts, instead of discouraging the lad, only served to fan the flame of his curiosity. He endeavoured to obtain all possible information concerning Abdallah's dwelling-place, and when he had with difficulty elicited some vague particulars, he set out to find the ruined castle, inhabited by the holy man. In this old castle, remote from men, Abdallah had found a refuge from the persecution of the fanatical party, who hated him virulently. Nor would he have been safe here, had not the castle fortunately the evil reputation of being haunted by the spirits of the ancient pagans, so that none of the faithful dared approach its walls. Nay, they would not even pronounce its name, so great was its supposed noxious influence; and had the building not been a conspicuous object, it is likely Hadschi Wekkes would never have found it, for he dared not ask any wanderer to direct him. The approaches were all overgrown with underwood and creeping plants, the place had, in very truth, a plague-stricken, spectral aspect.

Undeterred by these obstacles, the lad pushed on, and soon neared an open space, where, under the shade of a tall tree, sat an old man of cheerful mien. When he caught sight of Hadschi Wekkes, he greeted him.

"Thou must be no ordinary youth," he

said, "to brave the prejudice which deems everyone a heretic who crosses this threshold. As thou carriest no tools, I infer thou comest not to seek the treasures which fools say are guarded by demons. Mere curiosity would lead no one to brave the contempt of his fellows. Therefore I scarcely err in deeming that thou comest in quest of me."

"It is so, in truth," answered Hadschi Wekkes, and he proceeded to explain the object of his pilgrimage.

The old man professed his readiness to impart his knowledge, but warned the lad that this was meagre. He consented to remain in the sage's home, to imbibe his wisdom, and read with him out of the great open book. This reading was no sentimental worship of the kind practised by Jean Jacques Rousseau; it rather resembled the teaching of Mill. Abdallah simply observed the laws and workings of Nature, and drew practical conclusions, with regard to God and man, from the phenomena passing before his eyes. He held Nature as neither wholly evil nor wholly good.

Hadschi Wekkes, in his account to Maltzan, thus condensed Abdallah's doctrines:

"When I began to understand what the old man meant by Nature, I begged him to tell me his views about men. Are men good or bad by nature? I wished to know."

"What is good?" asked Abdallah, "and what is bad? These terms are not cognate in all places and ages. Theologians define the good as in conformity with the laws of God; evil as that which is contrary to them. But the so-called commands of God are different in every creed. Now, I say that everything is good which is beneficial to all human beings, and even theologians have been obliged to reckon benevolence and mercy as undoubted virtues. Formerly this was otherwise. Before the time of Moses, Christ, and Mahomet, there were religions that knew no 'good,' save the strict observance of rites and ceremonies. Good and bad were terms only associated with human laws. Whatever conduced to the welfare of man, as a social being, was pronounced good. The more people lived together in families or communities, the more complicated grew the ideas of good and bad. I have assured myself that man, in the so-called state of Nature, knows nothing of such ideas. I once conversed with a negro chieftain, who was in the habit of selling his subjects as slaves, or of killing them without any fault on their part. I explained to him that it was wrong to do harm to one's fellow-creatures. 'If so,' he replied, 'the weak and cowardly are the only good people; they hurt no one because they dare not. He who has power and courage does what he likes.' Neither is everything in Nature good, as we understand the term. I will teach you that in action, you must wait till the Monsun (rainy season)."

"I was obliged," continued Hadschi Wekkes, "to wait for the rest of my lesson till the Monsun. When it had come, Abdallah led me to a rocky prominence, whence we could overlook a large meadow. I here beheld a strange scene. The whole area was occupied by flocks of migratory birds, who assembled annually, at this season, before beginning their pilgrimage to other climes. Suddenly some of these birds rose up from the ground, and flying with full force against one of their comrades, proceeded to pierce him with their sharp beaks."

"Those are the old and weakly, who cannot join in the flight," explained Abdallah, "because they have grown unfit, the younger kill them. It is a necessity of Nature; but I ask, is the Nature that causes this necessity good? I mean good in the human sense of the term, when it forces one animal to kill another of its own kind?"

"I concluded that, in asking me this question, which I could but answer in the negative, Abdallah did not wish to contend that Nature was bad, but only that our human ideas of bad and good are not applicable to her. He nodded assent when I told him my thoughts."

"Our ideas," he said, "are derived from our own narrow personality, while Nature is impersonal. One animal is nourished by another, one plant overgrows and kills its fellow. All this would be wrong judged by our human standard. And it is little different with men in an uncivilised state. Let me relate to you some of my experiences. I have not always lived in solitude. When I was young I travelled the length of Arabia, and crossed the sea of Jemen (the Red Sea) till I came to the coasts of the black men. The first tribes I visited were Mahometans, like to ourselves. They had not long been converted, and many an old man among them remembered the days when they were heathens. They told me how they had been ignorant of such ideas as God, Right, and Wrong. At the time I could hardly credit this assertion, but later, I came upon a people amongst whom I still found such a state of ethic ignorance. The powerful only enjoyed property and freedom, while the weak suffered every conceivable evil. Once I found the whole tribe in a state of jubilation, because a hostile attack was in preparation against a neighbouring tribe, and they felt assured of easy victory. Why, I asked? It then appeared that they had always been friendly with this people, which, however, had just been weakened in numbers and force by an epidemic, and now that it was weak, was regarded as an enemy. This war was nothing else but a horrible hunt. The attacked, many of whom were still suffering, fell like flies under the spears of their assailants. The whole tribe was exterminated, and why? Partly from sheer love of murder, partly for the acquisition of their lands. Is this vastly different to what the animals do, when they eat one another, or exclude each other from fertile spots?"

The preaching of Abdallah was that of the purest Humanity. He disbelieved the innate goodness of man, and therefore rated the benefits of civilisation very highly, not losing sight, however, of its attendant evils. His life of solitude was not led from choice or misanthropy, but had been forced upon him.

"My shoulders are old," he said to his pupil, "they can no longer bear the persecutions of the theologians. You are young, and have strong young shoulders; you must go out into the world, and live among men. Be more cautious than your master, who has often spoken too much at a time. Teach the truth grain by grain; no matter how slowly you instil, so long as you but teach it, for it is high time our country should arouse from her deathlike sleep of empty formalism, from the theology which kills the intellect, and extracts nothing from the Koran, save lifeless words."

Hadschi Wekkes grew up to manhood under Abdallah's care, and was nurtured on his doctrines. When his master deemed him fully educated, he commanded him to depart from Mount Sabber, that he might preach his creed in the wide world. Hadschi obeyed. He wandered through many lands, preaching his gospel, first timidly, then more boldly. At first he met with little success, and much persecution from the Kadis and Muftis. His doctrines, which, in their main bearings, resemble the enlightened rationalism with which Europeans are familiar, sounded astonishing and subversive to oriental ears. The innate superstitiousness of these people is opposed to such belief, while their theologians repress it from interested motives. No wonder, therefore, that Hadschi Wekkes suffered much oppression; but he preached on nevertheless, though many and many a time he was detained, and forced to undergo an examination before the religious judge. One such examination he relates in this wise:

"What," asked the Mufti, "do you believe of Allah?"

"I believe," answered Hadschi Wekkes, "that he is the great Incomprehensible."

The Mufti was obliged to be satisfied with this reply, for this is one of the many terms permitted to a Mussulman in enumerating the attributes of the Divine Being.

"What do you believe about the angels?"

"I believe that they are invisible."

This too was orthodox, but it did not please the Mufti, for it sounded a little as if the cause of their invisibility was their non-existence.

"And what do you think of the fasts?" he questioned further.

"To fast is good both for body and soul, since the stomach rests, and the mind's action is not overclouded with food."

This reply was also not what the Mufti wished to know; he did not care for the hygienic aspect of the question. He continued his queries, but the answers he obtained from Hadschi Wekkes afforded no ground for the imputation of heterodoxy, while they gave no satisfactory proof of orthodoxy. He therefore had to dismiss the prisoner, and thus it happened on every similar occasion Hadschi Wekkes eluded the theologians by such evasive replies. Their antipathy consequently increased, while their various persecutions hindered the spread of his work. After much consideration the reformer determined on a medium course. He resolved to found two religions, of exoteric and esoteric form. Enwrapping the former with familiar Arabian phraseologies, of a mystic nature, he only revealed the true unvarnished faith to such as he deemed fitted to receive the truth, according to the observations he had made of their mental capacities, while imbibing the exoteric form. His genuine doctrine was too simple to appeal readily to an imaginative Eastern mind.

In this wise he founded little congregations throughout all Arabia. His work bore good fruit in the shape of tolerance and enlightenment; and though the progress was slow, and often disheartening, Wekkes laboured on with perseverance and faith. He is still living, but he has reached the evening of life, his strength is failing, and he fears his mission work is nearly ended. Only quite recently did he escape with bare life from the bitter rancour of his enemies. Maltzan describes him as a veteran of noble mien, his well-cut features have a spiritual aspect, his face is alive with mind, he possesses a mercurial vivacity of movement and intellect, and while endowed with deep poetic feeling, is totally free from all sentimentalism or self-consciousness. He shows a keen interest in all European concerns, and has an intelligent comprehension for all our social reforms, while he condemns in unmeasured terms the hollow varnish of occidental civilisation, which the Khedive is spreading over Egypt, regardless of the utter ignorance it covers.

It would be of extreme interest if, of the many travellers through Aden, some of the intelligent and Arab-speaking would visit this reformer, and give to the world further accounts of his great work, since we may look for no more from Maltzan, whose pen has been taken from his grasp by the relentless hand of Death.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LX.

THE next day medical evidence was forthcoming as to the insanity of David Powell, who had been removed to the County Asylum. Testimony was, moreover, given by many persons showing that the preacher's mind had long been disordered. Even the widow Thimbleby's evidence, given with many tears, went to prove that. But she tried with all her might to bear witness to his goodness, and clung loyally to her loving admiration for his character. "He may not be quite in his right senses for matters of this world," sobbed the poor woman, "and he has been sorely tormented by taking up with these doctrines of election. But if ever there was an angel sent down to suffer on this earth, and help the sorrowful, and call sinners to repentance, Mr. Powell is that angel. I know what he is. And I have had other lodgers—good, kind gentlemen, too; I don't say to the contrary. But overboil their eggs in the morning, or leave a lump in their feather-bed, and you'd soon get a glimpse of the old Adam. Now with Mr. Powell, nothing put him out except sin; and even that did but make him the more eager to save your soul."

Several witnesses who had testified on the previous day were re-examined. And some new ones were found who swore to having met Mr. Errington going along the road from his own house towards Whitford in great agitation, and asking everyone he met if they had seen his wife. The hour was such that to the best of their belief it was impossible he should have had such an interview as Powell described, with the deceased, between the time at which the cook swore he left his own house and their meeting him in the road. On this point, however, the evidence was somewhat conflicting. But the Whitford clocks were well known to be conflicting also; St. Mary's being always foremost with its jangling bell, the Town Hall clock coming next—except occasionally, when it hastened to be first with apparently quite capricious zeal—and the mellow chimes of St. Chad's, that were heard far over town and meadow, closing the chorus with their sweet cadence.

There certainly appeared to be no cause, no conceivable motive for Algernon Errington to have committed the crime. Many witnesses combined to show with what sweetness and good-humour he bore his wife's jealous tempers. And, besides, it was notorious that he had hoped through her influence to obtain assistance and promotion from her uncle, Lord Seely. Whereas, on the other hand, there did seem to be several motives at work to induce the unfortunate lady to put an end to her own existence. There could be little doubt that she had committed the post-office robberies, and the fear of detection had weighed on her mind. Moreover, that she had for some time past been made unhappy by jealousy and discontent, and had contemplated making away with herself, was proved by several scraps of writing besides that which her husband had found, and produced at the inquest the first day. In brief, no one was surprised when the foreman of the coroner's jury delivered a verdict to the effect that the deceased lady had committed suicide while under the influence of temporary insanity; and added a few words stating the opinion of the jury that Mr. Algernon Errington's character was quite unstained by the accusation of a maniac, who had been proved to have been subject to insane delusions for some time past. It was just the sort of verdict that every one had expected, and the general sympathy with Algernon still ran high.

As for him, he got away from the Blue Bell as quickly as possible after the inquest was over, slipping away by a back door where a close fly was waiting for him. When he reached his home he locked himself into the dining-room, and sat down on the sofa with closed eyes, and his body leaning listlessly against the cushions, as if all vital force were gone from him. The prevailing, and, for a time, the only sensation he felt was one of utter weariness. He was so completely exhausted that the restful attitude, the silence, and the solitude seemed positive luxuries. He was scarcely conscious of his escape. He felt merely that the strain was over, and that voice, face, and limbs might sink back from the terrible tension he had held them in to a natural lassitude.

But by-and-by he began to realise the danger he had passed, and to exult in his new sense of freedom. Castalia being removed, it seemed as if all troubles must be removed with her!

The funeral of Mrs. Algernon Errington was to take place on the following day, and it was known that Lord Seely would be present at it, if it were possible for him to make the journey from London. It was said that he had been very ill, but was now better, and would use his utmost endeavours to pay that mark of respect to his niece's memory. Mrs. Errington, indeed, talked of my lord's coming as a proof of his sympathy with her boy. But the world knew better than that. It knew, by some mysterious means, that Lord Seely had quarrelled with Algernon. And when his lordship did appear in Whitford, and took up his quarters at the Blue Bell, rumours went about to the effect that he had refused to see young Errington, and had remained shut up in his own room, attended by his physician. This, however, was not true. Lord Seely had seen Algernon and spoken with him. But he had not touched his proffered hand; he had said no word to him of sympathy; he had barely looked at him. The poor old man was overpowered by grief for Castalia, and it was in vain for Algernon to put on a show of grief. About a matter of fact Lord Seely would even now have found it difficult to think that Algernon was telling him a point-blank lie; but on a matter of feeling it was different. Algernon's words and voice rang false and hollow, and the old man shrank from him.

Lord Seely had come down to Whitford on getting the news of Castalia's terrible death, without knowing any particulars about it. Those were not the days when the telegraph brought a budget of intelligence from the most distant parts of the earth every morning. A few hurried and confused lines were all that Lord Seely had received, but they were sufficient to make him insist on performing the journey to Whitford at once. Lady Seely had tried to impress on him the necessity of shaking off young Errington now that Castalia was gone. "Wash your hands of him, Valentine," my lady had said. "If poor Cassy has done this desperate deed, it's he that drove her to it—smooth-faced young villain!" To all this Lord Seely had made no reply. But in his own mind he had almost resolved to help Algernon to a place abroad. It was what poor Castalia would have desired.

But, then, after his arrival in Whitford all the painful details of the coroner's inquest were made known to him. He made inquiries in all directions, and learned a great deal about his niece's life in the little town. The prominent feelings in his mind were pity and remorse. Pity for Castalia's unhappy fate, and acute remorse for having been so weak as to let her marriage take place without any attempt to interfere, despite his own secret conviction that it was an ill-assorted and ill-omened one. "You couldn't have helped it, my lord," said the friendly physician, to whom he poured out some of the feelings that oppressed his heart. "Perhaps not, perhaps not. But I ought to have tried. My poor, dear, unhappy girl!"

On the day of the funeral Lord Seely stood side by side with Algernon at Castalia's grave, in Duckwell churchyard. But, when it was over, they parted, and drove back to Whitford in separate carriages. Lord Seely was to return to London early the next morning, but, before he went away, determined to pay a visit to the county lunatic asylum, and see David Powell.

On the day of the funeral Algernon had spoken a few words to Lord Seely about his wish to get away from the painful associations which must henceforward haunt him in Whitford, and had reminded his lordship of the promise made in London. But Lord Seely had made no definite answer, and, moreover, he had said that, by his doctor's advice, he must decline a visit which Algernon offered to make him that evening. Was the "pompous little ass" going to throw him over after all?

In the course of that afternoon he heard that old Maxfield intended to come down on him, pitilessly, for the full amount of the bills he held. A reaction had set in in public sentiment. Tradesmen, who could not get paid, and whose hope of eventual payment were greatly damped by the coolness of Lord Seely's behaviour to his nephew-in-law, began to feel their indignation once more override their compassion. The two servants at Ivy Lodge asked for their wages, and declared that they did not wish to remain there another week. Algernon's position at the post-office was forfeited. He knew that he could not keep it, even if he would.

It began to appear that the removal of Castalia had not, after all, removed all troubles from her husband's path!

But the heaviest blow of all was to come.

Lord Seely left Whitford without seeing him again, and sent back unopened a note, which Algernon had written, begging for an interview, with these words written outside the cover in a trembling hand: "Dare not to write to me, or importune me more."

Algernon received this late at night; and before noon the next day the fact was known all over Whitford. People began to say that Lord Seely had obtained access to David Powell, had spoken with him, and had gone away convinced of the substantial truth of his testimony; that his lordship had left orders that Powell should lack no comfort or attention which his unhappy state permitted of his enjoying; and that he had strongly expressed his grateful sense of the poor preacher's efforts to save his niece.

From London, Lord Seely—who had heard that Miss Bodkin had visited Duckwell Farm while his niece lay dead there, and had placed flowers on her unconscious breast—sent a mourning-ring and a letter, the contents of which Minnie communicated to no one but her parents. Nevertheless, its contents were discussed pretty widely, and were said to be of a nature very damnatory to Algernon Errington's character. However, the painful things that were said in Whitford could not hurt him, for he had gone—disappeared in the night, like a thief, as his creditors said—and no one could say whither.

CHAPTER LXI. CONCLUSION.

Our tale is almost told. The last words that need saying can be briefly said. When some weeks had passed away, Mrs. Errington received a letter from her son, demanding a remittance to be sent forthwith Poste Restante to a little seaport town on the Italian Riviera. He had not during the interval left his mother in absolute ignorance as to what had become of him, but had sent her a few brief lines from London, saying that he had been obliged to leave Whitford in order to escape being put in prison for debt; that his present intention was to go abroad; and that she should hear again from him before long.

Algernon had been so quick in his movements, that he managed to be in town, before the story of Lord Seely's having cast him off had had time to be circulated amongst his acquaintance there. And he was enabled, as the result of his activity, to obtain from Mrs. Machyn-Stubbs and others several letters of introduction calculated to be of use to him abroad. He was described by Mrs. Machyn-Stubbs as a nephew of Lord Seely and her intimate friend, who was travelling on the Continent to recruit his health, after the shock of his wife's sudden death.

He had brought away from Whitford such few jewels belonging to his dead wife as were of any value, and he sold them in London. He furnished himself handsomely with such articles as were desirable for a gentleman of fortune travelling for his pleasure; and allowed the West-end tradesmen, to whom the Honourable John Patrick Price had recommended him during his brilliant London season, to write down against him in their books some very extortionate charges for the same. His outfit being accomplished in this inexpensive manner, he was enabled to travel with as much comfort as was compatible in those days with a journey from London to Calais, and he stepped on to the French shore with a considerable sum of money in his pocket.

For a long time the tidings of him that reached Whitford were uncertain and conflicting; then they began to arrive at even wider and wider intervals; and, finally, after Mrs. Errington left the town, they ceased altogether to reach the general world of Whitfordians. The real history of the circumstances which induced Mrs. Errington to leave the home of so many years was known to very few persons. It was this:

About a twelvemonth after Algernon's departure Mrs. Errington made a sudden journey to London; and, on her return, she confided to her old friend, Dr. Bodkin, that she had sold out of the funds nearly the whole sum from which her little income was derived, and transmitted it to Algy, who had an absolute need for the money, which she considered paramount. "But, my dear soul, you have ruined yourself!" cried the doctor, aghast. "Algernon will repay me, sir," replied the poor old woman, drawing herself up with the ghost of her old Ancram grandeur. The upshot was that Dr. Bodkin, in concert with one or two other old friends of her late husband, made some representations on her behalf to Mr. Filthorpe, the wealthy Bristol merchant, who was, as the reader may remember, a cousin of Dr. Errington; and that Mr. Filthorpe benevolently allowed his cousin's widow a small annuity, which, together with the few pounds that still remained to her of her own, enabled her to live in decent comfort. But she professed herself unable to remain in Whitford, and removed to a cottage in Dorrington, where she had a kind friend in the wife of the head-master of the proprietary school, whom we first presented to the reader as "little Rhoda Maxfield."

Mrs. Diamond (as she was now) lived in a very handsome house, and wore very elegant dresses, and was looked upon as a personage of some importance in Dorrington and its vicinity. Her husband had decidedly opposed a proposition she made to him to receive Mrs. Errington as an inmate of his home. But he put no further constraint on Rhoda's affectionate solicitude about her old friend.

And the two women drove together, and sewed together, and talked together; and their talk was chiefly about that exiled victim of unmerited misfortune, Algernon Errington. Rhoda preserved her faith in the Ancram glories. And although she acknowledged to herself that Algernon had treated her badly, he was invested in her mind with some mysterious immunity from the obligations that bind ordinary mortals.

A visitor, who was often cordially welcomed at Dorrington by Matthew Diamond, was Miss Chubb. And the kind-hearted little spinster endured a vast amount of snubbing and patronage from her old enemy, Mrs. Errington, on the battle-ground of polite society, with much charitable sweetness.

Old Max lived to see his daughter's first-born child; but he was unable to move from his bed for many months before his death. Perhaps it was the period of quiet reflection thus obtained, when the things of this world were melting away from his grasp, which occasioned the addition of a codicil to the old man's will, that surprised most of his acquaintance. He had settled the bulk of his property on his daughter at her marriage, and, in his original testament, had bequeathed the whole of the residue to her also. But the codicil set forth that his only and beloved daughter being amply provided for, and his son James inheriting the stock, fixtures, and goodwill of his flourishing business, together with the house and furniture, Jonathan Maxfield felt that he was doing injustice to no one by bequeathing the sum of three thousand pounds to Miss Minnie Bodkin as a mark of respect and admiration. And he, moreover, left one hundred pounds, free of duty, to "that God-fearing member of the Wesleyan Society, Richard Gibbs, now living as groom in the service of Orlando Pawkins, Esquire, of Pudcombe Hall;" a bequest which sensibly embittered the flavour of the sermon preached by the un-legacied Brother Jackson on the next Sunday after old Max's funeral.

Dr. Bodkin still lives and rules in Whitford Grammar School. His wife's life is brightened by the sight of her Minnie's increased health and strength. But she has never quite forgiven Matthew Diamond, and has been heard to say that young Mrs. Diamond's children are the most singularly uninteresting she ever saw!

Of Minnie herself, the chronicle hitherto records a life of useful benevolence, undisfigured by ascetic affectation, or the assumption of any pious livery whatever. She keeps her old delight in all the beautiful things of art and nature, and old Max's legacy has enabled her to enjoy some foreign travel. She is still in the first prime of womanhood, and more beautiful than ever. But, at the latest accounts, poor Mr. Warlock has not been tortured by the spectacle of any successful rival. For his part, he goes on worshipping Miss Bodkin with hopeless fidelity.

For a long time Minnie continued to visit David Powell in the lunatic asylum at stated periods. He generally recognised her, and the sight of her seemed to soothe and comfort him. After a while he was pronounced cured, and left the asylum; but his madness returned on him at intervals, and he would voluntarily go and place himself under restraint, when he felt the black fit coming. He did not live very long, being assailed by a mortal consumption. But as his body wasted, his mind grew clearer, stronger, and more serene; and before his death Minnie had the satisfaction to hear him profess a humble faith in the Divine Goodness, and a fearless confidence in the mysterious hand that was leading him, even as a little child, into the shadowy land. There was as large a concourse of people at his burial, as had ever thronged to hear his fiery preaching on Whit-meadow. His memory became surrounded by a saintly radiance in the imaginations of the poor. Stories of his goodness and his afflictions, and the final ray of peace which God sent to cheer his last moments, were long retailed amongst the Whitford Methodists. And his grave is still bright with carefully-tended flowers.

Of Algernon Errington the strangest rumours were circulated for a time. Some said he had become croupier at a foreign gambling-table; others declared he had married a West Indian heiress with a million of money, and was living in Florence in unheard-of luxury. Others, again, affirmed that they had the best authority for believing that he had gone to the United States, and had appeared on the stage there with immense success. However, the remembrance of him passed away from men's minds in Whitford within a few years; in London within a few months. But it was a long time before Jack Price left off recounting his final interview with Errington. "That young Ancram, you know. Captivating way of his own. What? On my honour, the rascal borrowed ten pounds of me. Ready money, sir, down on the nail! Bedad, it was a tour de force, for I never have a shilling in my pocket for my own use. But Ancram would coax the little birds off the bushes, as they say in my part of the world. Principle? Oh, devil of a rag of principle in his whole composition. What? I wonder what the deuce has become of him! I give ye my word and honour he was really—really now—a Charming Fellow."

LEARNING TO COOK;

A BOARD-SCHOOL LESSON.

In the schools of Christchurch, Chalton-street, King's-cross, there is established a Cooking-Centre. A twin establishment exists at Blackheath; and beyond this useful pair of metropolitan sisters, cooking-centres (proper) are not.

Now, a cooking-centre is a new combination of words; it is an equally new creation and institution; and it means a place, or kitchen, built especially for the purpose of showing how to cook to a select number of board-school girls, and built in a district, or spot, fairly accessible to a given number of board-schools, sprung up hither and thither round about. The presiding genius of these cooking-centres is a lady from the new Cooking University. She gives her "demonstrations" (that is the technical word) at one centre or the other, by turns, on the proper scholastic days, and she has so large a rotation of girls that it takes a fortnight to get back to girl number one. Deputations of seven or eight scholars each, from five schools, make up her audience daily; and her hours to receive these little people and demonstrate to them are from two to four. A "demonstration" being the very thing to Parisina's mind, at Christchurch Schools, Chalton-street, Parisina presented herself, one afternoon, radiant and expectant, to become, at a first glance, more radiant still.

"Why, look," she exulted, in a discreet whisper, "there is positively a parlour-stove! There's the dust-pan-shape little fire-hole, and narrow little hobs, and all! How capital! Look on the table, too. I can see a nutmeg-grater, and I could buy one like it anywhere for a penny; I can see a penny tin pepper-box; the saucepans are only saucepans, and not wonders of culinary utensils; and—do just see!—the teacher is going to 'demonstrate' upon two sheep's hearts! Besides, that is only a very small bag of flour, half-a-quartern; and that's a very small piece of suet; and those are quite ordinary plates, and cups, and basins; and one out of those three eggs is cracked; and that's a very familiar bag of soda;

and a very familiar basin of dripping; and that's a common salt-box; and there's nothing particular about the paste-board; and—and—in short, I think everything is very solid, and thorough, and satisfactory! Look at the place, too. Ordinary whitewashed walls; ordinary wooden mantelshelf; a proper cupboard; the regular Windsor chairs; some smoke (because that parlour-grate was not lit soon enough); and that general air of woodenness, and brassiness, and straight utility, peculiar to a kitchen. Nothing too grand about any of it, is there?"

No; although it was a bit of a shock to Parisina to see the knuckle-half of an uncooked leg of mutton brought in, followed by a good pair of scales; and although it was more of a shock still, to find, on closer examination, that the long white counter or table was furnished with the academic gas-stove, on which the saucepans were being put to do their duty, instead of upon the little parlour-grate.

"Now, are artisans fed upon legs of mutton?" whispered Parisina, not without indignation. "And are 'lodgings to let' in Battle-bridge here, in Somers-town, in Clare-market, in Bethnal-green, furnished with gas-stoves?"

Parisina's wrath becoming evident, drew forth an explanation.

"I don't do the cooking at the parlour-grate," were the words of the kind lady in command (she shall be called here the Lady Suavia), "because, if I did, I should have to turn my back, and the children could neither see nor hear. We have the gas-stove simply for convenience of demonstration. I told the children, at the very first lesson of their course, that though I should show them nothing but what could be done over a parlour fire, I should be obliged to use the gas, so that they might all see. I was very careful they should understand."

The necessity for this, in Parisina's mind, was fully and generously conceded; and she looked on again, so far assuaged.

"Now, I'm going to roast this half-leg of mutton," said the Lady Suavia, taking hold of it—and she was still in her bonnet, as she had come; she only prepared herself by taking off a mantle, and putting on a bibbed-apron, and a pair of oversleeves—"I'm going to roast this half-leg of mutton; and though I should have liked to have roasted it at this parlour-grate, the fire is not big enough—it has only just been lit—and I must put it into the gas-roaster, where it will be cooked exactly the same."

Parisina's sensitiveness was all to the fore again. "There now!" she cried in a discreet whisper. "Another excuse for not cooking by the things the children would have to cook by at home! If it's only because the fire is all smoke and black coal, for what reason upon earth wasn't it lit an hour ago, before the children came?"

Well, it was just one of those hitches that will occur in the movement of all mundane machinery; arising, possibly, from the smallest oversight of the smallest underling, but increasing in the size of it till it becomes everywhere manifest. At Christchurch, most likely, the girl acting as kitchen-maid, had not been punctual; and Time, not having been taken by the fore-lock, was out of arm's-length for ever. Parisina, however, soon saw something that took her to admiration's side once more.

"Now," began the gentle Lady Suavia, "if I were going to roast this mutton by this parlour fire, I should hang it on a jack." She showed a jack, and explained what it was. She further desired that all jacks should be wound up before the joints were hung upon them; to wind afterwards injured the springs. "But," she went on, "if I had no jack, I should take a common hook, like this; and at the end of it I should tie on—just as you see there is tied on—a skein of worsted. Worsted, when once turned, will keep on turning, helped by the weight of the meat. But be sure that your skein is worsted. Cotton, or a string, would be of no use."

Good. So were the next points good, equally.

"I am going to weigh my mutton," said the Lady Suavia, "because I have scales here, you see, and I like to be very accurate. If you have no scales, you must just listen to the weight your butcher says when you buy of him, and remember it. Put a screen, too, let me tell you, round your meat when you are roasting it, to keep the draught away. If you have no screen, take a towel-horse or a chair, and put plenty of clothes upon it."

This was showing how to do without three expensive articles of cooking-appliance, and yet how to be quite successful in their absence. Something even better followed, too, in due time.

"I will tell you now," said the Lady

Suavia, "how to roast without a jack at all, and without a dripping-pan, and without an open fire. It is the French way; for the French, you know, have close stoves, not open ranges; and they always roast in the way I want you to learn now."

The two sheep's hearts were the viands under demonstration. After they had been washed, dried, well discoursed upon, and exhibited, and had had their cavities filled up with veal-stuffing—concocted daintily, and from the beginning, before the pupil's eyes—they were simply put into a saucepan, with the accompaniment of a certain (given and very small) quantity of dripping, the lid was put upon them close, and there they were.

"Mind you, they'll want basting," warned the Lady Suavia. "For basting, always have an iron spoon ready, and a plate to put it on; and you'll find I shall baste these every few minutes—whenever I have an opportunity, indeed, as the other cooking goes on."

It was so. Every now and then the lady's neat hand removed the saucepan-lid, filling the class-room with an odour as brave and appetising as any chef could produce in the kitchen of a king, making audible a delicious hissing as the boiling fat she took up in her spoon fell down again upon the meats; but surely no cooking could have given less trouble; no cooking could have caused less outlay for firing and utensil. The cooking seemed all good, too, when it was finished, and the Lady Suavia applied herself to the pleasant task of carving, and a bonne bouche of heart was served to every girl to taste. Moreover, a large joint of beef, or a whole leg of mutton, could be roasted in the same way, it was explained. The only essentials would be more dripping (six or eight ounces, perhaps), a larger saucepan (or fish-kettle), and a stronger fire. The right direction had been reached in that item, eminently.

The roast heart had not been sent round to taste without its proper supply of gravy. The preparation of the gravy, in fact, had preceded the hiding away of the half-leg of mutton in the gas-roaster. The knuckle of the leg had been deftly chopped off; the little odd ends of skin or gristle had been cut away; and these had been put into a saucepan with some water, some salt and pepper, and the stalks of the lemon-thyme with which the Lady Suavia had flavoured her veal stuffing. Parisina flushed up with extra strain of attention, too, when she saw that something was about to be done with a dish of genuine old "scraps" and bones.

"Old bones," proclaimed the Lady Suavia, "can be used again and again. Goodness can be got out of them, till they are as white as these boards. Always keep all your old bits and bones to be boiled up as gravy."

Parisina sank back in her chair, with a fierce sigh. "Gravy!" was her indignant comment. "Gravy! Is gravy food? Is that the only use that 'scraps' can come to?"

The Lady Suavia was dropping a few bones and pieces into her saucepan of mutton-trimmings, and no response could come. There was no further use for the conventional "scraps" at that lesson, it was evident; for the dish was set aside, and we went on to the next subject. To finish up the section "Gravy," however, it is necessary to state that the Lady Suavia did not leave it, when it was ready, without a demonstration how it could be browned.

"To brown gravy," she explained, "gives no goodness to it, and rather spoils the flavour, unless you are very careful; it is only done to give it a rich appearance. There are several ways of browning; onion-skin is one; but I am going to show you how to brown with sugar. I shall take this old iron shovel (an old iron spoon is best; only all mine are new and far too good, it would be a shame to spoil them), and I shall just put this spoonful of sugar on the end of it, so. Now I shall put it in the fire—see—and let it burn, absolutely burn; not till it is a cinder, though, or else it will make the gravy have a disagreeable taste. There, see! It is alight now; and as pretty as snapdragon, isn't it? And now I'll drop it into the saucepan where the other things are, and it will be all done."

The mutton and the hearts, with this gravy and the stuffing, ended the meats and their immediate surroundings for the day; the intervals in their cooking being used for preparing the puddings that are usually eaten with them. These were three: the familiar Yorkshire in the pan, the plain suet, the dumpling, or Norfolk jockey; and each one was taken, right through, from birth to death, or from rise to fall (into the mouths of the little audience), successfully. When the suet was being chopped, the Lady Suavia showed how it could be chopped nearly noiselessly, by taking hold of the point of the knife with the left hand, and helping it so as on a pivot. When the flour was to be weighed, the Lady Suavia told how a certain spoon held so much weight, so that people could measure that way instead of weighing, if they had no scales; a further note on this subject being that flour is sold by the stone, fourteen pounds, which makes a quartern only three pounds and a half. When bread-crumbs had been wanted to stuff the heart, the Lady Suavia had grated from a genuine "heel" of "household"—wooden and wedge-like enough—exactly of the make that might be thrown away; and the Lady Suavia had explained how this was better than bread that was new, and how it should always be saved to be applied to some good use. When the batter was being stirred, the Lady Suavia desired the hand should always move from right to left. With this right action, the hand, it was declared, might beat batter for a culinary ever, and would never tire. When this made batter was being poured out, thin, into its square pan, the Lady Suavia explained why it should never be made double the thickness, or three times, or more; because, having no real cooking, and only getting heat in the pan, if it were other than a mere shell, or coat, it would never get properly done. When the cloth was wanted for the suet-pudding, too, the Lady Suavia recommended that it should always be dipped in boiling-water before being used; in case it had been washed with soap or soda, and the taste of these should spoil the real materials, and for other reasons do no good. And besides these speeches, every one of which had suitable demonstration, there was a regular net-work of speech running here and there, in every rest and stay, filling up the needful pause for roast or boil, and always keeping the scholars' note-books active, and their wits alive.

"Now what," asked the Lady Suavia, one time, "did I tell you, at your last lesson, were the three essentials for good cooking?"

There was an eager shout of words from the nest of thirty or forty girls, as they sat, head above head, in their neat gallery. Distinguishable in the midst of it was the good noun, "Punctuality."

"Punctuality? Yes," said the Lady Suavia. "But I didn't begin with punctuality, did I? The three essentials are cleanliness, punctuality, and economy; and, left to myself, I should begin first with cleanliness. I should wash my hands, and all the things I was going to use, shouldn't I?"

The girls looked down abashed, making that confession to Lady Suavia.

"I think I told you," she asked presently, "the six most usual modes of cooking. It is some days since I told you, but can you remember?"

The eager rush of words was repeated. The pupils were equal to the occasion. The six usual modes stood—roasting, boiling, stewing, frying, baking, broiling.

"Yes, that is right," commended the Lady Suavia, running over the six modes again in her quiet mild way.

"Now, to help you to remember them, I want to give to each a characteristic. Listen, now; for I shall ask it you again, another day, I daresay. Roasting is the most savoury—the nice frothed outside and rich brown gravy make it so; stewing is the most nutritious, for all the juices of the meat are kept in, and no particle is wasted; boiling is the easiest, you have but to put everything into a pot and let it stay there; baking is the most wasteful; frying is the quickest; and broiling the most difficult."

Parisina had a word to put in about the despatch of frying. "There!" she whispered. "Do you hear that downright honest reason why the poor are so wedded to the frying-pan? Where time is money, it is a primal requisite that time should be cut short. In other matters, it seems to me, mankind condones a little waste, if speed makes up for it. Is an artisan housewife, getting the nearest way to a point, never to have the need recognised, but always to get a scolding?"

She was hushed; for other questions were upon the Lady Suavia's tongue, and being answered.

"There are some roast meats we put a stuffing to, are there not?" was an inquiry.

"Yes!" the young Board-scholars shouted, helped to their quick affirmation by savoury memories of the stuffed heart just gone down.

"And what, pray, are they? Can you tell me?"

"Hearts! Pork! Veal! Fowls!" These came, with promptitude and precision.

Then, slower, with more deliberation, "Ducks. Turkeys. Pheasants."

"And any more?"—since there was here a puzzled stop.

"Gooses!"

It was the essay of a shrill pupil; and at it there was a smile in the mild eye of the Lady Suavia, and a laugh that went swiftly round.

"Well!" when there was opportunity once more; "do you remember what I told you last lesson about babies' food, and how to make it?"

Voices went up briskly, and hands to match, in national-school fashion; and it was understood that this matter was remembered thoroughly.

"I told you, did I not," said the Lady Suavia, "that it was not good to make babies' food of bread, because of the yeast and the fermentation which goes on when the little babies have swallowed it. Then I said it was not well to feed babies on rusks, because of—— ?"

"The butter and the sugar!"—in a confident roar.

"The butter and the sugar. Right. For they are not suited to the digestive powers of a baby, either. Well, then, I said the best thing for the food was——?"

"Flour!"

"Flour. And the flour was to be baked——?"

"Oh no!"

Ah, but that was wrong; for the flour was to be baked; and it was to be baked in a given way, and for a given time; and then was to be made ready for administration. This last led up to another point.

"Then, how are we to mix the flour? Can you tell me? In water? milk?"

"Milk!"

Wrong again. In the flour itself, our young scholars were requested to recollect, there were all the qualities necessary for subsistence, and if milk were added to it, it would be too heavy, and disagree. Milk alone, also, was quite enough without any thickening (unless, at a certain stage of babyhood, a thickenment of farines, like rice and semolina, which only yield warmth, not flesh), for milk, again, contains every requisite to nourish the human body, and would keep life up without any help whatever.

"But there are others, besides babies, for whom milk is good. Can you tell me?"

"Pusses!"

The same shrill maiden who had been over-prominent before, it must have been; though, in the titter and the quick call back to order, it was impossible to do more than give a smile and a surmise.

"Look at me, now, please," had said the Lady Suavia, at one of the earliest "demonstrations;" "I am going to chop up—— ?"

"Parsley!"

"Yes; parsley for my stuffing. Write parsley in your books: p, a, r, s, l, e, y, is the way to spell it. Take the stalks off your parsley always; they are too bitter; then chop it—without any noise, you hear—just as I told you about the suet; and now I am going to add to the parsley this little bit of lemon-thyme. Remember, a very little flavouring is wanted for things; a ha'porth of lemon-thyme, carefully used, will flavour three or four cookings for you; and I only want you to use the leaves of this, recollect. Just pick and pull them off, like this. The stalks are woodeny and strong; but I shall put them into the gravy saucepan, so, and then we shall get the flavour, and can take the wood out and throw it away."

Now, there will be ready acknowledgment of the good tendency of such teaching as this; ready acknowledgment, also, of the fact that cooking-ground was at last being occupied in real and sensible fashion. Under the pleasant conviction, Parisina's hedge-hog quills were being pulled out, one by one, and she was pleasantly developing into as sleek a dormouse as ever slept. Truth to say, it was impossible to continue to be very irate in the presence of the painstaking Lady Suavia. There was a tenderness with her, a gentle earnestness, a conscientious mastery of her subject, and a thorough carrying it out, that quelled all animosity, and compelled consideration and sympathy to take its place instead. With her to point out and expound, it was as clear as daylight why she must have had a second stove, even had she cooked her leg of mutton and her Norfolk jockeys, say, at the parlour fire. How else could she have "taken" gravy also, and suet-pudding, and French roast heart? There would have been no room to show the five dishes at once, and make the lesson as valuable as it was. With the Lady Suavia, again, to give the "demonstration," it was easy to see the obstacles to the girls cooking for themselves; the shoals of implements it would require, the scores of fires, the cart-load of materials, the mighty addition to expenses, and corresponding call upon the rates. With the Lady Suavia, moreover, and pre-eminently, to give the "demonstration," did she not "demonstrate" with clearness and from the very beginning? a showing-how being, perforce, the first step for a child: and this showing-how being accompanied by a request that each child should try for herself at home? In addition to this it required no effort to comprehend the narrow limit of government hours; forty, only, for the whole year; stamping the lessons down into twenty, of two hours each. And in a two-hours' lesson, it must be remembered, several minutes get rubbed out; counting the needful intervals, and the discipline that must be observed at the outset and at the end. At Christchurch, for example, the Lady Suavia, on entrance, had to call the scholars' names, and the scholars had to answer; on departure, the monitors of each attending school had to leave a book, and give and take some few directions; in the course of the lesson all "demonstration" was stayed, because Norfolk jockeys were being eaten, and hot roast mutton, and sheep's heart, with knobs of savoury stuffing. But, with all the drawbacks, we were clearly on the right path, and had assisted at a cooking lesson that was real and indisputably useful.

As for the moral influence of simple contact of Board-school girls with such a lady as the Lady Suavia, it is immense. Parisina had her own mode of leaping into being assured of this, which shall be related. Leaving Christchurch precincts, on the conclusion of the lesson, she (Modesta with her) hustled against a deputation of girls, wending their way, in the dusk's damp and gloom, to their distant schools. In spite of Modesta's deprecating hold, Parisina would fall in, and speak.

"Was it you, Alice, I heard whisper, in the school, that had made some porridge?"

Parisina had picked up this merry little creature's designation an hour or more before. The dancing eyes of her, and chattering mouth, had drawn down the monitor's reproof, and made her notable.

But Alice, under a personal encounter, was self-enunciative no more; became shy; and stammered out a repudiation of the porridge manufacture, with blushes and low voice.

"Have you made anything, then?" Parisina was pursuing.

"Yes."

"What?"

"I poached an egg!"

"Well!" and Parisina turned from the hung head to a scholar in the front of the file, a little older, "have you cooked anything that you have seen?"

"Yes; last week I did. I took the porridge."

"And was it good?"

"Mother said so! And—and——"

"Well? Go on?"

"I gave some to my little brother!"

A smile. And another smile when it was told that the little brother liked it, and that the little cook liked it, and that it was a case of liking altogether. And then the point was reached that had especial and emphatic reference to the Lady Suavia.

"Well, and do you like the lady who is teaching you all these things?"

"Oh yes! And she seems an educated lady, too, I think!"

Parisina's enjoyment was almost audible. "Indeed? Educated, eh? And how do you tell?"

"Oh, because she speaks so nicely, and explains things to you, and tells you how to spell!"

It was not bad for a little Board-school critic, aged twelve, about, was it? For a little waif, or stray, swept by a new Act of Parliament into a mesh of education, from which she was to emerge extra-glossed and polished? Yet this may be an instance of intellectual influence, possibly? not moral, after all? Be that as it may, it made a sentiment come from Parisina, as the cooking-deputation was bid adieu to, and quicker steps left it well behind.

"Dear me!" it was. "If these little creatures are to be kept the hindmost, it behoves a stricter setting the house in order for those who desire to remain in the van! Doesn't it?"

A reflection, true, indisputably; and that may be salutary.

KEANE MALCOMBE'S PUPIL.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

Donald Forsythe has been more than two months at Abbeylands.

Spring has grown to summer—summer when she is fair and young, and the first freshness has not died away from her chaplet of leaves.

Very sweet is the early summer; the first roses of the year bloom at our window, and push their perfumed faces in to look at us when we give them the chance. And a summer of happiness is in my heart—happiness that has as yet no name for me, but that holds a thrill of fear!

I do not go so often now along the Long-lane and over the stile, but Donald amply makes up for all deficiencies on my part, as hardly a day passes that does not bring him to Whitegates. He is but little changed from the boy pictured in his mother's room; a dark moustache shades the smiling mouth, and he towers above poor little me like a young giant. Otherwise there is little difference between the boy and the man, and the same sunny light is in the dark grey eyes as of old.

How ridiculous it seems to me now to think that a time was when there was no such thing as listening for the sound of the gate-latch, and the quick step up the avenue! There lies all the difference of mere existence, and life lived to the full; between that time and this! What a flavourless sort of thing must each day have been when there was no bright face to look in at the low window where Aunt Janet and I sit in our morning-room at work — no figure, grey-coated and slim, to lean its arms on the sill, and, cap in hand, beg the mistress of Whitegates to pardon the iniquity of a fragrant cigar! How absurd to think of a world without such happy incidents! Why one might as well talk of life being lived in the enchanted castle, before the prince came to waken the sleeping beauty. But Whitegates—dear old-fashioned Whitegates—is no castle, and I am no beauty; so this simile is poor.

I took no thought of whither the path I was taking would lead me. I had no aim, no end, no design—I was like a swimmer floating dreamily along a stream, that sees not the falls he is nearing. It was left for the hand of simple Nannie to take the veil from before my eyes.

"I'm right proud and happy, Miss Mabel," she said one day, her broad freckled face all aglow with delight, "to hear the village say ye'll be the leddy o' the big house yet."

I do not answer at once, and Nannie grows afraid that she has angered me. Her hands shake as she folds and unfolds a shawl lying on my bed; and in a less gleesome voice she adds:

"You're not angry with old Nannie, are ye, Miss Mabel, dear?"

"No; I'm not angry. But don't go gossiping down in the village again."

With a grieved, questioning look at me, she leaves the room, and softly closes the door. My heart is laid bare enough to me now. This strange light that has gleamed out upon my life, till every hour glistens like a dewdrop in the sunshine—is—love! The love that I have read about, and thought about, but never yet known—the best treasure one human heart can bestow upon another.

And yet I might have known how it was with me, when first the day grew to seem so long and aimless, on which I did not see him. I might have known the name of the new glamour that was over me, when, hour after hour, I was content to sit in the wide window-seat, with busy fingers and absent thoughts, and many a glance down the lane, where I could see the well-known figure ever so far away, and count with a heart-throb every step that brought him nearer to me.

I knew it all so well—the click of the gate, the quick step up the low broad stairs, the light tap at the door, and then the bright face smiling down upon me, and the long close clasp of the strong hand, as I stood there trying my best to look as if I had not been "watching and waiting."

Like the faint, sweet scent of dead flowers, the thought of those precious hours come back to me now—the memory of that one summer, when I lived my life intensely, and fancied every bird, and tree, and flower in some strange way were part of my own happiness!

Yet I had never hitherto put together in my mind those four letters that form "love"—never till now, when Nannie tells me what the people say, and these words find an echo in my own heart.

"Donald's wife! Donald's wife!" I can hardly think clearly, for the sound of some voice whispering this over and over again in my ear. I do not think I am naturally a vain woman—perhaps because I have had so little temptation in that way; but now I fasten back the curtain from my window, so that a clear light may fall upon my face, I lean my arms upon the table, and gaze steadily at the reflection in my glass.

There is no beauty!

Great eyes full of a strange radiance look back at me, but all else besides is too insignificant for comment.

Yet I glory in my white slender hands, a heritage from my English father. I caress them one with the other; I hold them up to the glass; I laugh with joy to think that they are fair for Donald. They would not be such a prize to a pretty woman as they are to me, pale-faced, insignificant thing that I am!

But graver thoughts come over me; not doubts of Donald's love—that can never be now, for Nannie's words are like a key that enables me to read what was an unknown tongue before. I know that he is wondering when he shall see me again, just as I am wondering when I shall see him.

The grave thoughts that come are those of a terrible responsibility laid upon my shoulders — thus having Donald's happiness in my keeping. I am afraid of not proving worthy of such a task. I think of his mother, and feel that she must have made her son fastidious almost to a fault as to how a woman speaks, and acts, and thinks. As Mrs. Forsythe comes to my mind, I feel a strange dismay when I remember that I have somewhat neglected that dear friend of late; and, more than that, I call to mind that there is some change in her—a greater sadness than there was two months ago; and I think that my own happiness has made me selfish, and I have not sought to find out what this additional sadness may be. I do not at this time connect it with Donald's love for me; I fancy, on the contrary, that my love for her son, and his for me, will help to clear it away from the dear, beautiful face; and I build little castles as to all we shall do some day, to try and drive all sad memories from her life.

I think this word "we" with such a delicious sense of pride, that I almost feel as if I were a tall woman.

Then the grave thoughts came again, and the self-distrust that is ever born of a great love possesses me.

What would become of me if ever a cloud came over that bright face I love? How should I bear to see an angry, or, still worse, a pained look in the eyes that now follow me with such a watchful tenderness?

My master's teaching has not been in vain. I kneel beside my bed, and from a humble, grateful heart pray that Heaven will grant me grace to be a loving, true, and faithful wife to Donald Forsythe.

It is now a day or two since Nannie's communication has given me so much food for thought. Aunt Janet and I sit at work in the morning-room. They are cutting the large grass-field at the side of the house; the window is open, and the mower whetting his scythe makes pleasant music for us.

"Click-click" go Aunt Janet's knitting-needles, and every now and then she looks anxiously over her spectacles at me, deftly making for her that most important article of attire, a best cap.

"You've got the border quite a quarter of an inch deeper than the pattern," she says; "measure it now and you'll find I'm right. There, it's more than the quarter inch, and you're snipping the ribbon ends on to the carpet. Pick them up, child. There's no litter so bad as that which clings under the broom, and Nannie might go over the floor half-a-dozen times without gathering such like snippetings. Put your best work and taste in that cap, for when Mrs. Vandaleur comes back to The Cottage, there'll be gay doings you may be sure, and I must be prepared. You'll need a new gown yourself, child, this summer."

Dress is not a failing of mine; indeed, my opportunities that way have been limited; for we have only one draper in our benighted village, and he is but half a draper, being a grocer and general dealer on the other side of his shop. However, I look with complacency on Aunt Janet's idea of a new gown, and I make up my mind that it shall be procured at the large town some miles distant, which is in our eyes an emporium of fashion, and that it shall be a delicate grey, with a soft satin stripe; also, that there shall be a new bonnet, with pale pink roses. What further details of toilette I might have proceeded to go into is hard to say; but Aunt Janet brings me "up by the round turn" by her next words.

"As you told me Mistress Forsythe was laid by with a cold, I just stepped in to call for her this morning while I was out; she's not herself yet, and seems down-like, as you may say. She tells me there's a friend of the boy Donald's, a young lord that was with him at the University in foreign parts, coming to stay at Abbeylands; and it's a good thing, too, to think the laddie will have company of his own years."

Of course I am delighted that Donald's friend is coming—very much delighted indeed—nothing could be pleasanter for him. All the same, I don't believe he's been dull, not even the least bit in the world. But my train of thought is broken by a little horrified shriek from Aunt Janet.

"Why, Mabel, child, if you're not sewing that bow on the inside my cap! Whatever is the lassie about?"

In dire confusion I hasten to unsew the knot of violet ribbon with which I have been gravely ornamenting the interior of the best cap, and bless Nannie for coming in most opportunely "on household cares intent."

She desires the presence of "the mistress" in the kitchen, and meanly taking advantage of that lady's absence, I fling down the cap upon the table, leaving the bow hanging uncomfortably half in, half out; dart up the stairs into my own room; don my cape and hat; and before Aunt Janet and Nannie have finished their household conference, am away across the big field, where the new-cut grass smells fresh and dewy, and the mowers touch their caps to me as I pass. Then I go through a gateway, and down a shady path, where the trees almost meet over head. I am making my way towards the river, thinking as I go, sauntering slowly along, how charming it will be for Donald Forsythe to have his friend the young lord at Abbeylands. Of course they will go fishing all day (our river is a celebrity in that line), and what could be nicer for them?

Here the sound of someone whistling in the distance makes my heart go at a ridiculous pace, and I feel two burning spots set themselves alight on my cheeks. In a few moments a tall grey figure comes leaping over the fence, descends to earth just in my pathway, and there stands Donald before me, bareheaded as before a queen! handsome, winsome, laughing Donald, just the very fairest, dearest thing earth holds for me!

"Where are you running away to?" he says, perching his glengarry on his curly locks again. "I went to Whitegates to find you, and there was Miss Fraser all alone, looking despairingly at a head-dress—bonnet—cap—what do you call it?—I mean the sort of thing she wears upon her head, you know—and 'Donald,' she said, 'do you know where that daft lassie's gone to?'"

The two burning spots are still alight, and I am rather at a loss to explain my sudden flight, so I give some transparently lame explanation of my conduct, and then we walk slowly on side by side, with superb disregard of Aunt Janet and the neglected head-gear!

I am not by any means sure our conversation is intellectual: I am quite sure it would have been uninteresting to a third party, but it is very pleasant; and soon the least bit in the world of a rise in the ground gives Donald an excuse to make me lean upon his arm, "up the hill, you know," and when the "hill" is surmounted, I forget to withdraw my hand—which is gloveless, and lies snugly on the grey coat-sleeve. Then the conversation flags, and the river, which we are nearing, takes it up, and sings—sings—sings a sweet, low, joyous murmur of content!

Suddenly Donald stops short, takes both my hands in his, and turns me round so that he can look full into my face.

What he reads there I cannot tell, perhaps just what is beating in my heart, for he bends gently down and kisses me, with soft lingering tenderness, upon the lips. A great bush of sweetbriar, still glistening with the dew of a summer shower that fell an hour ago, gives out its luscious fragrance, sweeter to my fancy than that of any flower that blooms.

Just by this bush we stand;—and ever since, all through the long and weary years, the scent of the sweetbriar brings back to me the memory of that day, when the river sang a lullaby to my dreaming heart;—then I forget all about the spring that comes but once in every life, and has gone by for me. I forget everything, and everyone in this wide world except the scented beauty that is all around me, and Donald's first love-kiss on my lips!

I suppose all stories of happy love have a certain resemblance to each other. However great the number of variations, still the one old-fashioned melody runs through all. "We two," that is the tune life is set to for the time being—the rose-tinted silken string on which the days, like golden beads, are strung. The world is very small for us just then; one idyl absorbs and bounds it all—"we two."

It is thus with Donald and me; each day seems too short for all the happiness it brings. Again and again I have to say to myself, "It is all real; it is no dream;" for so far away did my old life seem that, though in reality but a few weeks ago, it might have been years.

Calmly, quietly, affectionately, Mrs. Forsythe welcomed me as the future daughter of the house. I could not tell if she had been surprised or not, that sunny day, when Donald reached home and told his story, kneeling at her feet like a child, laying his head down upon her lap, to hide happy tears that started to his eyes as she blessed him and me. The shadow I noticed some time ago was over her still, and sometimes I looked up to find her watching me with such grave, sad eyes, that they haunted me even in my dreams and puzzled me there as much as in the reality of day.

Aunt Janet was in a state of such intense satisfaction, that she forgot to be angry with Donald when he crumpled her second-best cap out of all shape in an energetic embrace.

As to Nannie, on first being told the news, she sat down abruptly, flung her apron over her head, and burst out crying; then she hugged me in her honest arms, and then begged my pardon humbly. "But I'm hardly my ain sel' this mornin'," she said, "but just like some daft boddie, Miss Mabel. I telled ye yon time I kenned it was true!" I had not the heart to reprove her; for where is the soul, gentle or simple, that can resist the intense delight of saying, "I told you so?"

Of my master's greeting to me, when I told him of my betrothal to Donald Forsythe, I cannot well bring myself to speak. Are there not moments in our lives too sacred and precious to be spoken of?

Patient Lizzie shed tears of joy over my happiness. "I'm no greeting for sadness," she said to the minister, as he bent over her tenderly; "it's just the prayers that are in my heart for the girlie, that turn to tears for lack of words!"

Heaven knows, if loving wishes and fond prayers could have kept me from sorrow, my life had known little save happiness; and I know now that I did not rate at half its true value all this love and kindness, for the one great light hid the radiance of every other, and the world was all Donald to me.

Time passes quickly when we are happy. Honeysuckle is scenting the lanes; the pretty bladder-fern is covered with little gold-bronze grains of seed; the tall white-and-purple spears of the foxglove rise up everywhere; and the meadow-sweet waves white perfumed plumes by the river-side. Summer is at its fulness, earth is rich in beauty, and life to me seems as beautiful and full as nature.

The minister's wife has set her delicate deft fingers at work on a wonderful piece of lace destined for my bridal finery, and Aunt Janet knits from morning till night at all sorts of garments that are capable of being manufactured on a pair of pins. Donald and I take long walks about the neighbourhood, under the idea that we are searching for rare plants for my master's Scottish Flora—a work he is always compiling, and yet never seems any nearer completion; but I don't think the Flora benefits much from our expeditions. Once, indeed, Donald fastens a long, pinkish, straggling object, all stalk and no leaves, into his glengarry, and gravely presents it to the minister as a "new specimen." My master looks at it a moment through his large round magnifying-glass, and then lays it gently aside, with a kindly-amused smile, as he says, "Lads and lasses are but poor botanists when they have to help each other!" And I think my master was right. Just as we are about to take leave of him, he looks earnestly at Donald for a moment, and lays a loving hand upon his shoulder: "You've found one flower in these northern hills, lad, that has grown up under the eye of the poor minister, and is very precious to him." There is a quiver in my master's voice, for is not the "corner" going to be left empty again?

"Nay, say no words, lad," he continues, as Donald is about to speak, "but let the lassie come to me again some day, and say, with her little hand in mine, 'I've never had to weary, master, for the love I left behind me!'"

Grave and silent we walk home, for my master's voice and words have sobered us. Clearly, and with a tender regretfulness is this day marked in my memory; for it is the last, the very last, in which I am wholly happy and content.

The lingering walk in the gloaming, the fond "Good-night" by the white gate—it is all there; one of those times given to help us by the memory of their sweetness in weary days to come—

. . . such as e'en to think of were alone
A hive for wintry hours, though they were gone!

Aunt Janet and Nannie each greet me as I enter the house with a piece of news. Nannie tells me (with the broadest smile of which even her broad face is capable) that my "braw new gown" has duly arrived; and Aunt Janet, with an evident "arrière pensée" given to the best cap, still unfinished, tells me that Mrs. Vandaleur has arrived at The Cottage.

NEXT WEEK WILL BE COMMENCED

A NEW SERIAL STORY.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD,

Author of "Never Forgotten," "The Second Mrs. Tillotson," &c. &c.

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PHŒBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER I. DIDO HOUSE.

Dido House was the name of an important academy for young ladies, directed by the Misses Cooke.

It belonged to the class known as "finishing"—an epithet of terror for parents of contracted means. There were well-accredited instances of fashionable families despatching a whole series of daughters to receive the high-class instruction to be imparted at the academy, but who had been themselves "finished," as regards their worldly means, by the enormous bills sent in by the presiding ladies. Indeed, as the "Newly-Rich" would put their sons in the Guards, not with a view of serving their country, but for the purpose of contracting intimacies with young men of rank and fashion, so were they equally zealous to receive admission in the household brigade commanded by the Misses Cooke, where opportunities of the same favourable kind were opened to the young ladies. Naturally, therefore, the purchase-money was high, the style of living costly, the extras of an appalling kind; and the Misses Cooke, having always a list of candidates waiting for vacancies, were able to make such demands as they chose. If dissatisfied or grumbling, parents and guardians were at liberty to remove their children, the principals rather plaintively conveying that they had been mistaken in their opinion of the poor and paltry persons who had thus imposed on them; and, in fine irony, mentioning other establishments which, they were certain, would be more suited to the class of thing such parents were in search of.

Daughters of the nobility then, of leaders of fashion, children of the untitled aristocracy, of the great county families, of baronets and Members of Parliament gliding upwards to the Peerage—such were the clients the Misses Cooke sought to "finish."

The principal herself had been finished at a great academy, and had officiated as governess to the Ladies Clara and Mary Draper, daughters of the Countess of Canonbury, who had, later, been finished successfully into a duchess and a marchioness respectively. This feat at once brought her reputation, and with some savings and borrowings, she founded her well-known establishment, situated close to Clapham, in fine bracing air. She was, of course, permitted to refer to the august ladies just named, who had a sort of regard for her; also to the Most Noble A., to her Grace of B., to the Right Hon. C., and to the Hon. and Rev. D. The establishment was successful to an extraordinary degree, if tested by some rather inappropriate fruits which one would have thought had but small connection with scholastic matters—namely, the "happy establishment of pupils in life," as Miss Cooke phrased it. In this direction a certain "luck" attended the school; and, indeed, it often seemed not a little unfair to the principal, that these indirect matrimonial results should not be regularly affichéd in the testimonials, just as lists of honours, prizes in the Civil Service, &c., are set out proudly by the seminaries for young gentlemen. Still, the fact was well known in the proper quarters, and there was always a long list of candidates waiting until the Misses Cooke should be ready to receive them.

The establishment was conducted by Miss Cooke, principal, Miss Emma Cooke, an inferior sister, acting as what in an orchestra would be called chef d'attaque, or leader, only that she took the unusual duty of playing a little on every instrument, on the pupils, on "the parents and guardians"—always spoken of as a vast generality, as one would talk of "the poor," or "the people," or "the press." She was something like a chief of the staff, spurring about the field, and scarcely ever out of the saddle.

Miss Cooke herself, tall and meagre, correct in manner as well as in that limited amount of skin and flesh that well-worked ladies of fashion display, seemed never to grow older or ill, living behind a cloud, from behind which she only came on occasions of solemnity or to meet "the parents," in state. Emma Cooke was in the other extreme in all these points.

A stout German gentleman came three times a week to teach his language (an extra); a French professor to teach French (also extra); while the pianoforte, guitar, mathematics of a light kind, writing, history, singing, dancing, calisthenics on "Madame Beyer's elegant drawing-room system," with "taste and the art of dress," by a pupil of a great French man-milliner's—all these departments of knowledge were taught by special professors, and all, of course, on "extra" principles.

Some of the small-souled, discontented parents, who did not wish that their children should be grounded in these costly "extras," might fairly wonder what was the ordinary curriculum of the establishment, but they might be fairly reminded that it was "tone" that was imparted, and an indefinable air of fashionable grace that was to fit the young ladies for the sphere in which they were to move.

One of the most important of the extras was singing. Who does not know the charming little compositions of Mr. Canova, so graceful and tuneful, so easy, and yet conveying the idea of difficulty. Where could a pair of female voices glide and curl at equally-balanced intervals, like well-trained ponies, through music, as through one of Canova's duets? Every one of good degree sang his songs, and two or three of his more favourite melodies were an absolute little income to him. He directed Lady A.'s concerts, and the Duchess of B.'s matinée. He was always glad to call himself "Mr. Canova," eschewing the "Signor;" was of small size, but graceful and dignified, with a black silky moustache and a tender, languishing voice.

Nearly every young lady in the establishment was, in process of finishing, under the care of this elegant maestro. What made him of special value to Miss Cooke was that he cultivated a rough and harsh manner, sometimes speaking with such a sharp severity that the young ladies came away from his presence in tears. Several he had absolutely declined to teach, and to one handsome girl he had applied the term "porca." There was a commotion in the house when formal complaint was made of this language: but Mr. Canova refused distinctly to retract or make any amende. He offered to resign. All the world was astonished to see how indulgently Miss Cooke treated the erring singing-master, the truth being, as observers of human nature might see, that this was a fault in the right extreme, the danger to establishments where young ladies of condition were educated arising from an undue courtesy.

She dealt with him like a mother, negotiating impartially between both sides, holding herself out as neutral; not a very difficult rôle, as she was supported by the pupils, who were all upon his side. Even the offended young lady herself was not very obdurate, and owned that she herself had been very provoking. With such dispositions on all sides, it was not very difficult to compose matters, and the fascinating Canova maintained his position.

Such was Dido House, a handsome country seat, deserving that common compliment of "standing in its own grounds" (mansions not usually standing in those belonging to other residences), luxuriously appointed with baths, music-rooms, gardens, swings, "appliances for promoting a graceful carriage, and moderately expanding the chest" (Madame Beyer's elegant drawing-room system, in fact), and offering every advantage for fitting young ladies of position and gentility to adorn "their future station in life." Such, too, was Miss Cooke, her system, and her school.

CHAPTER II. PHŒBE DAWSON.

THERE were among the pupils two particular young ladies, to whom the reader may now be introduced, being, as it were, called down to the "visitors' reception-room" for that purpose; for the whole course of events of this little story is destined to circle about these figures. Adelaide Cross and Phœbe Dawson were their names.

They were nearly of the same age, one eighteen and the other sixteen years old. Phœbe was a refined, dainty little creature, with all the piquante dignity of a Chelsea-ware shepherdess, and from her earliest appearance before the public had a very finished and complete air in her bearing, her dress, and appearance.

She was, indeed, a delicately-wrought piece of workmanship, with dancing eyes, and a lip so sensitive and airy that it played like some magnetic instrument under every emotion. Did any one fix their eyes on her, even for a moment, her eyes and lips were in motion, until a smile or laugh of mischief broke out. Required to look grave—as she often was on occasions when confronted with clergymen and other officials—the most she could assume was a sort of roguish seriousness; but that so nicely balanced, thate very second it seemed in peril of being overset, and a great scandal brought about. In the school annals there were several excesses recorded, on such awful occasions as when Dean Drinkwater came to give away the prizes, or deliver a lecture on religious morals in Passion Week. She was a high-bred little dame, her father (who was now dead) having been an officer of good connection. Her mother was a lady of condition and fashion, though not "well off," who "knew everybody," and was one of those favoured rovers who, without any special recommendation, are found a necessary evil or blessing, as the case may be, at country houses during festival times. She was indebted for these privileges to a pleasant air and manner of familiarity and self-confidence, as well as to a surprisingly intimate knowledge of family details and circumstances, which she always took care to keep posted up to the latest moment. She was as unaffected by rebuffs as was the ocean by Mrs. Partington's mop; rather, what was a rebuff for another lost its character when applied to her, and dissolved into a cloud of spray.

Mrs. Dawson was, in short, a power in the circle in which she moved, always apparently busily engaged, always in consultation with tall, elderly gentlemen of her connection, whom she amused or interested with her talk or stories, and who somehow respected her. She had been for years foraging skilfully over town and country in her own interest; and when her daughter was "finished," intended to enter on a new field of operations suited to her genius, with a view to a good match for "My Phœbe," as she always called her. Indeed, had she been left without any provision, instead of that respectable portion—half settlement, half insurance, which she had warily effected, and caused her husband to keep up during his lifetime—she would have somehow contrived to live in convenience and comfort—resembling one of those vagrant cows, which the artful owner turns out to crop the stray patches of grass along the roadside, under the hedges, &c., and who thus graze at free quarters. Matters where serious outlay was involved did not come within the compass of her arrangements; it was therefore suspected—almost known for certain—among her friends, that the outlay for Phœbe's rather costly "finishing" came from some foreign source, or was defrayed in kind—the worthy lady acting like the useful agents to recruiting-sergeants who are known as "bringers." She was ever loud in her recommendation of the establishment to such families as had candidate daughters, dwelling on particular advantages and blessings, such as were not even known to the Misses Cooke themselves, and attracted the parents to an extraordinary degree. Yet, if she succeeded in placing her daughter at the seminary on such terms, she had art enough to make it assume the character of an obligation; and Phœbe herself always met with an appreciation equal to that enjoyed by any of the young titled maids, who received the benefit of all the extras.

This bright young girl seemed to reflect in her own person the two curious influences which distinguished her mother's character. As she walked, she unconsciously assumed a sort of patrician state, and, in a perfectly artless way, illustrated for her companions, in her own person, various notes and marks of high breeding—such as an arched sole of the foot, under which water might run as though under the arch of a bridge; a peculiar bone in the arm, "which all the Dawsons had"—and the rest. Yet, side by side with this dignity was a truly vagabond element, worthy of a little street Arab, for which pariahs and their antics she had the deepest sympathy and admiration. On this ground Miss Cooke had grave misgivings, and often reproved her pupil for the incurable "lowness" of her tastes. It must be added, also, that for grown-up gentlemen of the scamp description Phœbe had the most good-natured tolerance; and when a "good" story was related of one of this class "doing" a tradesman by some ingenious trick, Phœbe's mouth and eyes, indifferent to the morality, showed how she sympathised with the cleverness and originality of the device.

She no doubt owed this sentiment to her affection for her brother, Tom Dawson, a deplorable specimen of the class—a young fellow who had "done" everybody, and certainly himself, since he had long since "done" with every shilling he had in the world. This young gentleman used to bewail his condition in never having any money "that he could call his own," although, indeed, he might fairly be indifferent to the enjoyment of any coming under that description, since he found it more simple to employ that of other people.

There was a number of young satellites, of inferior talent and spirit, who belonged to Phœbe's party, and whom she had influence enough to lead into any mischief, as captain. Long remembered was that awful, particular anniversary of Miss Cooke's birthday—always celebrated as a festival, so far as a genteel distribution of cake and glass of wine to each boarder went—but henceforth recorded in the departmental annals of the school as though attended by something akin to the horrors of the Commune. It was on that day that the Rev. Mr. Higgins, an obscure curate and connection of Miss Cooke's, who had not risen with her to any greatness, was privileged to come and dine, a duty, or pleasure, in which he never failed—it being assumed that he was to be the heir general of the principal, after Miss Emma Cooke's life-interest was exhausted.

On the morning, then, of this day, just before the young ladies went in to breakfast, Miss Emma Cooke was seen to rush to her greater sister's apartment—"the study"—gasping:

"The statue! the statue, sister! Oh! dreadful!"

This particular description was always applied to a tall, full-length model of the goddess Minerva, in plaster, which was placed at the top of the first landing, conspicuous to visitors, holding a gas jet and globe. There being only one specimen of this classic art on the premises, the expressions, "At the statue," "Close to the statue," were understood in the house as a topographical measure—much as one would speak of "The Monument;" or, in lower circles, of "The Angel," or "The Elephant and Castle."

Visitors, parents, and guardians always caught sight of the goddess from the hall, and felt somehow impressed; and the goddess was, moreover, regarded with particular veneration, as the ground of influencing, even by material objects, the taste of the pupils—a grand principle in Miss Cooke's curriculum.

But what Miss Emma Cooke had to report in such agitation, was that the Minerva had been defaced!—that a scandalous outrage on the dignity of the statue had been committed.

The two ladies at once repaired to the second landing, and there saw but too plainly what had been done. A pair of black whiskers had been daubed on the figure; a black calico gown had been fitted to it; a pair—another pair—of garments, certainly not to be named, at least within the precincts of a correct young ladies' school, without the most delicate of circumlocutions—had been cleverly adapted to the limbs of the figure; while a cap and bands, of the proper clerical pattern, made up, not the likeness, but the suggestion, of the Rev. Mr. Higgins!

The two ladies were appalled. "This sort of thing" had been hitherto unknown; it was foreign to the character of the place. Once it got abroad that these vulgar excesses, which might be incident to the lot of common establishments, had infected the select shrine, it was all over with their prestige.

The same thought occurred to both the ladies—Send for Miss Dawson at once! Emma went down among the clustered young ladies, who were indeed waiting to know how the fun had been received, and walked straight to Phœbe, as a policeman would make for his prisoner. She said sternly:

"Miss Cooke desires to see you in the study."

Phœbe tossed her head, though the fine blood flushed into her cheeks, and followed with something of the prompt manner of the habitual offender, who, when he sees that "the game is up," surrenders, and gives no trouble. Once in the presence, she admitted her guilt.

"I begin to fear that you are utterly abandoned," said Miss Cooke awfully. "The fate before you makes me tremble. The distinction between right and wrong seems to be effaced in your breast."

Phœbe tried to be, or to look, penitent, and said that she "only did it for a piece of fun."

"Fun! Fun!" repeated Miss Cooke, even more shocked; "you call ridiculing all that is most reverend fun, do you? I declare it frightens, it appals me."

Miss Cooke uttered these generalities in a hard official manner, but when she entered on another view of the subject she became more excited.

"What am I to do with you? You are bringing disgrace on the establishment. You don't know how to behave like a lady. You are full of low, vulgar, middle-class ideas, which you did not learn here."

Phœbe's eyes began to sparkle.

"I am not vulgar. I am a lady, Miss Cooke; you know I am, and so is mamma. There are plenty of nice people among the middle-classes, are there not?"

"You have been brought up very badly, I fear."

"Not by her, Miss Cooke."

"You are not to answer in that free style. For the rest of this holiday, confine yourself to your chamber. You may be allowed to take a short walk at three o'clock, under charge of the matron, Mrs. Corbett. Your weekly money will be stopped for three weeks, and given to the Orphans' Home—not to defray the expense of repairing the statue."

"Statue!" said Phœbe, scornfully; "that plaster thing! Why, it's only a gas-lamp. I wish you could see the real statues we have at uncle's place!"

"This grows very serious," said Miss Cooke, colouring. "I shall write by the next post to your mother."

In a moment Phœbe was penitent and humble.

"No, no; don't do that, Miss Cooke," she said, "it will worry her."

"I shall write to your mother," repeated the lady principal, with stern emphasis. "I shall tell her that I am altogether unequal to the control of such persons as you, and that your tastes are hopelessly and incurably low."

Here Miss Cooke had the satisfaction of repeating, with effect, what had before failed, "And that you seem to have lost all reverence for things human and sacred."

Phœbe, not in the least affected by this picture of her degradation, could only beg that her mother would not be written to, promising amendment.

"I'll go and put the lamp—the statue, I mean—to rights, and make it quite nice: and, I beg your pardon, indeed I do, Miss Cooke; and, if you like, put me on my knees during dinner, with the Bœotian medal on me. I won't mind it in the least. But don't—don't write to mamma."

Colouring excessively at this unconscious contempt for the severest moral punishment known to the school, viz., "the Bœotian medal," worn with a brown ribbon round the neck, supposed to enter like iron into the soul, and the stigma from which was supposed to be life-long, Miss Cooke waved her hand, and said, hoarsely, "Retire!"

Phœbe was at once delivered over to the secular power in the shape of the matron, to be conveyed away to what was known as the infirmary, where both the sick and the wicked were always confined. Seeing that her submission had produced no effect, she drew herself up, and, with a haughty look that made Miss Cooke a little uncomfortable, went to her fate.

This little incident has been dwelt on with a view to exhibit Phœbe's character. She was, indeed, a sore trouble to the lady principal; and yet she was not mutinous or insubordinate. She was a favourite in the house, and was ever regarded indulgently, was always "sorry" for her excesses, and promising amendment. There was a dash and adventure in her proceedings which redeemed them, and took them out of the category of school crimes, to say nothing of a pleasant air of comedy impossible to resist. For her excesses there was a general tenderness. They were of this kind.

When a stray donkey was noticed from the windows which overlooked the prison-like walks of the place, repairing regularly each morning to browse upon a choice piece of grass near the gate, who was it that planned a daring scheme for "cutting him out," and bringing him in by the side-gate, to be tied up in the shrubbery until recreation hour? Who, of course, but Phœbe! And when some vexatious spirit prompted Miss Cooke to take a stroll on the bowling-green—the most sequestered part of the garden—a thing she was never known to do, who was at the head of the procession that met her gaze? There, on a frisking and kicking donkey, attended by a crowd of screaming, laughing young ladies of the best blood in the Peerage, was seated Phœbe, controlling him as though he were some highly-mettled racer; her whole energies absorbed in the task, hands down, her hair tossing about her neck, and executing, as it were, the task scientifically. So absorbed was she, indeed, that she was unconscious of the sudden desertion of her staff, who suddenly fled, and dived into the shrubberies.

It was not until she had all but ridden down the lady principal that Phœbe discovered the danger of her situation. What embarrassment followed, how it became dangerous to descend from the donkey's back, and that, too, under the terrible frown and speechless anger of Miss Cooke, may be conceived. Still, the want of dignity in the whole transaction, and the difficulty of going through the various judicial processes of solemn examination and severe reproof, made it impossible to deal with the matter as the high crime and misdemeanour it really was.

Again. People passing down the road to the west of the school were often puzzled by a large hoarding which rose above the unusually high wall, and which, unadorned by advertisements, seemed quite purposeless. For this unsightly screen, the cause of some expense to the lady principal, Phœbe alone was accountable. A row of high houses ran along the road, known as Maida Villas, from the roofs of which a commanding view of the gardens, bowling-green, &c., where the young ladies took exercise, might be obtained. The mere possibility of such a danger was not of much importance; unfortunately, it took concrete shape, the young ladies discovering that young gentlemen, with short pipes wedged firmly in their mouths, were framed in the windows during the hours of morning pastime, which they surveyed with stolid curiosity, until it was over.

This apparition caused quite a flutter among the seminary doves, though nuns could not have been more demure in their bearing. "He's looking at me;" "They are looking at you;" "No, he isn't;" "Yes, he is;" for one, more marked in his attentions than the rest, was soon distinguished. Such was the chatter, scarcely subdued, that prevailed. This observer, who was good-looking, was a subject of interest to the young maids; but the distance was great, and it was scarcely possible to make out a distinct inventory of his charms. His hair was pronounced to be of various conflicting shades; his eyes hazel, or of a bewitching blue or brown.

Mischief was in Phœbe's eyes. "Let us get the old telescope," she cried, "out of the hall!"

"Easy to say get it," said one—Bertha, "but you'd be afraid."

"I?" said Phœbe. "Not I! What fun it would be. How he would stare when he saw it pointed at him. I'd do it in a second. You don't think I am afraid?"

The telescope was procured, and put into Phœbe's hand. She recoiled from the rather unmaidenly act she had undertaken, but her spirit would carry her through. Her companions affected to continue their promenade all the while, stealing sly glances. Phœbe stood in the middle, the telescope resting against the trunk of a tree, her cheek beginning to flush. The whisper "She's afraid!" had caught her ear. The next moment one of the young ladies of Miss Cooke's highly-select academy was seen with her eye to the glass of a heavy astronomical telescope, pointed at a young gentleman seated afar off in a window. The glass was only pointed, for Phœbe was too flurried to see anything; but she carried out the little pantomime effectually. On this account she did not notice the gallant manner in which the compliment was received, the pipe being withdrawn, and the smoker, rising, and indulging in a number of smiles and bows, and even kissing his hand profusely.

For this reason, also, she could not notice the sound of approaching steps, or the apparition of Miss Emma Cooke—who was standing awfully beside her, looking with gasping wonder from the telescope to the attic, and from the attic to the telescope. Without speech or delay the offender was at once arrested, and led away to the presence of the civil power. A hurried court was held. The outrage was too heinous, and went to the very root of the institution.

The thing was so unprecedented that the powers knew not how to deal with it. Phœbe's readiness, however, saved her. He was, she urged, perpetually looking down at them. They could not walk in the garden without being stared at. They thought there was no harm in looking at him. This naïvely turning the offence into an act of self-defence puzzled Miss Cooke, and, at the same time, struck her as reasonable, and that there was, after all, some provocation.

Another girl might have been dealt with severely the following day, but Phœbe's luck did not desert her this time; and it was determined that that particular flank of the institution, always considered too much exposed for propriety, should be screened off. And the formidable hoarding was thus set up.

This again was a source of humiliation to Miss Cooke, who weekly received liberal proposals from advertising agents, offering to farm the same from her, and who could not be convinced that the structure had been erected for any other purpose but for one belonging to their profession. Still, her stoical firmness in declining did not profit her, as lawless persons went to great risks in climbing up, for the purpose of affixing notices of a low and even vulgar kind. The travelling circus never missed paying her this compliment, covering the hoarding during the night-time with equestrian ladies flying round the arena, and whose too gauzy skirts floated nebulously about their head and shoulders. This trial the lady principal had to accept; and for this trial the lively pupil was indirectly responsible.

Such was Phœbe, the gay, bright "tomboy" of the house. We now turn to her companion and friend, who was of a different nature.

A STRIKE IN THE UNITED STATES.

Sable. On a field argent a coffin couchant, with the label, "Tis is your hous." Supporters, two shot guns proper, subverted. Crest, a revolver fumant.

"Notice you have Caried this as far as you can By cheating thy men you three Bosses be Carefull if the Above dont Be your home in a Short Time.

From a Stranger
he nowes you."

The above pleasant document was served upon the gentlemen referred to, not in Sheffield, in the old wicked days, nor in the realms of Captain Rock, but no longer than twelvemonths since, in the Keystone State of the Great Republic of the West.

It is, we may premise, entirely foreign to our present purpose to discuss the morality or policy of trade combinations, on the part of either employers or employed. Trades unions in this country received, some years since, the sanction of the legislature, and as they grew overwealthy and powerful, were met by associations of employers; who, when attacked singly, were powerless, but banded together, proved not unequal to the task of coping with organised bodies of workers. Power has at length been pretty evenly divided between master and man. For a while, the skilful tactics of the leaders of trades unions, striking first against one employer, and then against another, maintaining meanwhile the men on strike from the earnings of those still at work, were attended by almost invariable success; but the associations of employers, by meeting this scheme of action by a general lock-out, have, at length, after several campaigns, inflicting great loss and suffering on both sides, brought about a better state of things. The high contracting powers have learned to respect each other, and boards of conciliation and arbitration have taught masters and workmen that time, money, and irritation may be avoided by an open discussion of the questions at issue. They know each other better than they did a few short years ago. Workmen have discovered that their employers are not mere arbitrary autocrats, making fortunes out of their thews and sinews, but men, without whose capital the thews and sinews before-mentioned would run a shrewd risk of standing idle, and who, by reason of their great fortune, can, if business be made too difficult, afford to forsake it altogether, and live on the interest of their capital. Masters, too, have found out that their workmen are not all of the stamp of the old-fashioned Sheffield unionists, whose doings were exposed a few years ago, but good honest fellows, whose anxiety to obtain a share of the good things of life is, if sometimes asserted with unnecessary violence, yet in the main reasonable enough.

This better tone has not been brought about an instant before it was required, as the supremacy of England in the iron and cotton markets of the world has recently been gravely threatened. Belgian iron has been, and is, largely imported into England. Ingots of Bessemer steel have been bought in England, carried abroad, worked up into railway material, and sold in this country at lower prices than those charged by our makers. American cotton goods find a ready sale in Manchester itself. These ominous circumstances apparently prove that in this country, during the last half-dozen years, the cost of production has, in certain departments of industry, outrun the rest of the world so far, that foreigners are prepared to struggle severely for a share of the trade, which we have hitherto considered our own.

Perhaps, at this critical moment, a glance at the relations of capital and labour in America may suggest some valuable reflections. In a new country, where work is plenty and labour scarce, wages naturally range high. Artisans in America were accustomed for many years to receive higher wages than their European brethren; but, since the "late misunderstanding"—known in Europe as the greatest civil war of recent times—found themselves all at once remunerated beyond their wildest dreams. The platform "eight hours' work, eight hours' play, eight hours' sleep, and eight shillings a-day" was completely outgrown by several trades. Not very long ago stonemasons were earning twenty-four dollars a week—paper dollars of course, but, allowing for the difference between gold and currency, equal to four pounds sterling. Many other artisans were paid in proportion—the immense outbreak of the spirit of enterprise, on the conclusion of the war, having raised the value of labour to an unprecedented height. This state of things was too delightful to last long. Labour poured into the United States from other countries, and, as the market became glutted with thews and sinews, came the financial collapse, which showed on how narrow a basis of capital the tremendous superstructure of speculative work had been raised. Railways in the course of construction were abandoned, houses were left unfinished, cotton-mills were stopped, and blast furnaces blown out. Thousands of people were thrown out of employment; and many who had left this country, to improve their fortunes in America, were compelled to return home. Since this crisis, a very general reduction of wages has taken place all over the United States, accompanied, in many cases, by strikes, and by a species of resistance which recalls the worst days of trades-union outrages in this country, and the worst kind of oppression exercised by them; the tyranny of the workman over his fellow-man, relentlessly enforced and enhanced by all the devices of terrorism.

In the statement of the outrages perpetrated in the Schuylkill and Shamokin districts of Pennsylvania, made before a joint committee of the Legislature of that State, by Mr. Franklin B. Gowen on behalf of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company, and the Philadelphia and Reading Railway Company, there is no trace of irritation at trades unions as such. On the contrary, it is freely confessed that the United States is, par excellence, the country of trade combinations, between both manufacturers, traders, and workers in their several capacities. Railways, coal and iron companies, accused of combining with other associations for the purpose of keeping up the price of freight and raw material, reply that they act exactly like other people. As the English reader is pretty well aware, the Great Republic is the country of all others where the principle of protecting native industry is most completely recognised, by the imposition of import duties so heavy in many cases as to be practically prohibitory. In nearly every sphere of industry this principle is asserted with more or less candour. Mr. Gowen's remarks, uttered before a tribunal abundantly capable of checking their correctness, are peculiarly instructive. "Every pound of rope that we buy for our vessels or our mines, is bought at a price fixed by a committee representing the rope manufacturers of the United States. Every keg of nails we buy, every paper of tacks we buy, is bought at a price fixed by the representatives of those who make the articles. Screws, and wrenches, and hinges are bought and sold exactly in the same way. We never buy a boiler-flue for our locomotives that is not bought at the trade price fixed by the representatives of the mills that manufactured it. An iron beam for your houses or your bridges is never bought, except at a price agreed upon by a combination of those who produce it. With gas-pipe it is exactly the same. With fire-brick it is exactly the same. Every piece of terra-cotta pipe for drainage, every keg of powder we buy, to blast the coal we mine, is bought under the same arrangement. Every pane of window-glass in this house was bought at a scale of prices established exactly in the same manner. White lead, galvanised sheet iron, hose and belting, files, and numerous other articles of commerce, are bought and sold at rates determined in the same way. When my friend, Mr. Lane, was called upon to begin his speech the other day, and wanted to delay because his stenographer had not arrived, and I asked Mr. Collins, the stenographer of the committee, if he would not act, he said no—it was against the rule of the committee of stenographers; he could not do it. I said, 'Well, Mr. Collins, I will pay you anything you ask; I want to get off, and would rather pay you myself than delay.' 'Oh!' said he, 'prices are established by our combination, and I cannot change them.'"

After such an exposition as this of the length to which trade combination is carried in "the States," it would have been absurd to inveigh against coal-miners for combining like everybody else, the only complaint against them being that they have preserved among them all the old traditions of "rattening," and visit the "blackleg" or "knobstick," who submits to reduced wages without the permission of his fellows, with cruel punishment. From the evidence adduced, it would appear that the will of the rattener is not invariably that of the general body of workers, but is often imposed upon them by a bold and active, but numerically small, minority. The outrages which were perpetrated in the Schuylkill and Shamokin region, between December, 1874, and July, 1875, do not appear, as a rule, to have been intended to injure the property of the employer, but to have been aimed at the working-men who wanted to work, and who, being in a free country, possibly imagined themselves free to work for any price they could obtain, rather than remain idle. They soon found out their mistake. At the Ben Franklin Colliery the men had accepted reduced wages early in the season, and were working peacefully and contentedly, when the "breaker" was burned by an incendiary. The destruction of the owner's property was merely incidental, the main purpose being to prevent the men from earning their daily bread. At the time when this object was effected, by the burning of the structure in which they were employed, the lowest-paid miner on the list earned sixty dollars a month, and the highest, a hundred and thirty dollars. At another colliery, within five or six miles of the "Ben Franklin," a band of twenty or thirty men, in the evening—almost in broad daylight—went to the breaker, drove the men away by force, and burnt the structure down. It belonged to a poor man who had invested his savings in a single colliery, and was probably ruined by the fire; while his workpeople were thrown out of employment, with little or no chance of getting fresh work. The method of getting together the necessary force, for a high-handed proceeding like that just cited, is peculiar. A little band of ten or a dozen determined men form themselves into a species of press-gang, and starting, armed of course, through a mining village, will force every man they meet to join them, as the pirates of olden times re-manned their ships with sailors whom they had taken prisoners. In this way sufficient numbers are soon collected to overawe any unprepared body of workmen. Once the ratteners met their match. On this solitary occasion the proprietors got notice of an intended attack, and placed twenty-five armed men around the mines, to protect their brethren who were working. The defending party were armed with navy revolvers, and behind them stood men with sixteen-shooting carbines, to hand to them when their revolvers were exhausted. For five hours that little band of determined men faced a howling rabble of five hundred, and so efficiently protected the colliery that work went on as if nothing had happened. Shortly after this event the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company were compelled to conduct their business in the mining region under an armed force. Every passenger-train that passed over the road was preceded by an engine with an armed posse. The locomotive engineer—foremost at his duty and unflinching at the post of danger—stood with his left hand on the throttle-valve, and his right upon a pistol, as the train passed through dark glades or by deep defiles, where every tree and every rock concealed an armed assassin. Men, armed to the teeth, were sent to protect their fellow-men in the right to labour; and this police force had to be lowered and passed down inclined planes where the human freight is supported by a wire rope. At a time when a number of those officers were about to descend an inclined plane, it was found that some cowardly rattener had cut the wire rope with an axe in three or four places—not so deeply that the danger should be discerned by the eye, but rather that it should be hidden until the strain was upon it. By a fortunate accident this infamous piece of work was discovered in time to avert a terrible calamity. A certain ghastly variety is discernible in these trade outrages, occasionally relieved by an infusion of highway robbery and burglary. Watchmen were frequently beaten and plundered; telegraph offices burnt; loaded cars moved on to the railway track, and the company's servants stoned; warehouses broken open and plundered; coal-trains were stopped and seized, and the railwaymen fired at; switch locks broken and switches misplaced; caution-boards torn down; tool houses broken into and plundered; stones and logs placed on the line. On the 3rd of June a grand demonstration was made. About a thousand men made their appearance in the neighbourhood of Mahanoy City, and stopped the men working at several collieries. About noon on the same day, a band of some twelve hundred men from Shenandoah, and other localities, marched through the city, wounding the policemen, and "raising Cain" generally. At night an attempt was made to throw the night passenger train to Shenandoah off the rails, by putting down stones on the track, but the villainous trick was discovered in time to prevent injury. The day's entertainment was finally brought to a close by an adjournment to a colliery near Mount Carmel, where the breaker was solemnly burnt, the rioters standing round the fire till it was consumed. A few days later two contractors at the Oakdale colliery left the mines, to return to Forestville, their residence. As they were crossing the mountain between Oakdale and Forestville, they were fired upon by three men, armed with shot-guns, and were both severely wounded. Several other men were fired at, and Frank Yost, of the Tamaqua police, was shot by two men in Tamaqua, as he was on a ladder at a lamp-post, turning off the gas, and died the next morning.

It is only fair to the ratteners and assassins who perpetrated these monstrous deeds, to mention that they seldom killed or injured a man without giving him what they imagined to be fair warning.

The notice quoted at the head of this paper is a specimen of the decorated style employed in addressing a "boss." Working men were talked to in very similar language, but less graphic power was expended upon them.

A general intimation was conveyed in this style: "Now men i have warented ye before and i willnt warind you no mor—but i will gwrintee you the will be the report of the revolver." The signature to this significant hint is a roughly-drawn sketch of the weapon referred to. Another document of the same kind is "signed at the top" with a pistol and a coffin, and proceeds in due form: "Notice is here given to you men the first and last Notice that you will get for no man to go Down this slope. After to Night if you Do you Can Bring your Coffion Along With you. Drift man stop at home and Cut no more Coal let him go and get Coal himself. I Dont mean Engineer or firemans let them mine there one Work now men the Next Notice you Will get I Dont mean to Do it With my Pen I Will Do it With that there Rolver I Dont Want no more Black legs at this Collary."

A quaint specimen runs thus:

"NOTICE.

"Any blackleg that takes a Union Man's job while He is standing for His Rights will have a hard Road to travel and if He don't he will have to Suffer the consequences."

(Here follows a sketch of a dead man in a coffin.)

(Signed) "BEACHER AND TILTON."

At Locust Summit on March 31st, 1875, was found posted the following:

"NOTICE.

"Mr. Black-legs if you don't leave in 2 days time you meet your doom there will Bee an open war—imeateatly—."

Among others notified to leave was poor Yost, who was told "to take a warning to save his life;" and so far as can be ascertained, the scoundrels who threatened generally contrived to carry their threats into execution. The record altogether conveys a very bad impression of the mining population of Schuylkill and Shamokin. Nevertheless, although we may hug ourselves here in England on the comforting fact that the tremendous reductions made during the past eighteen months in the wages of coal and iron-workers have been carried out without exciting a solitary trade outrage, and—sundry strikes and lock-outs to the contrary notwithstanding—have been for the greater part managed with excellent temper on both sides, we should yet remember that not many years have elapsed since similar villainy was connived at in our own industrial centres. In justice to our American cousins it must also be admitted that the proportion of "native-born citizens" among the miners of Pennsylvania is by no means large.

KEANE MALCOMBE'S PUPIL.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

"AND what is Mrs. Vandaleur like?" asks Donald, lounging lazily at my feet, as I sit working, or rather trying to work, in the big bay window. It is a very difficult thing to make much progress with a piece of embroidery, when first your cotton, and then your thimble is abstracted, and you are held prisoner while a spray of climbing rose is pulled in through the window, and fastened artistically in your hair; nor are matters mended when your long strip of work is taken from you, fastened into the form of a Greek cap, and perched upon a mass of black wavy hair, while two saucy eyes look laughingly up at you, and request an immediate opinion as to the becoming character of the "coiffure."

But to return to Donald's question.

"What is Mrs. Vandaleur like?"

"Mrs. Vandaleur is a widow—a short, plump, fair woman, with a round face, and little pudgy, white, helpless-looking hands. She lives in a cottage that she calls her 'little place,' and has a daughter whom she calls her 'little girl.' There is a croquet-ground, you know; and she gives entertainments which she calls 'little gatherings.'"

"What of the little girl?" Donald asks, when I pause for breath.

"Well, she isn't really a little girl at all: she's a grown-up young lady—and such a beauty!"

"Like a shepherdess, I suppose, Mab, only with no crook and no sheep; or a dear, darling wax doll, from the Lowther Arcade, with china blue eyes, and fluffy golden hair all frizzed down to her eyebrows. I hate such women!"

"Maud Vandaleur is not a bit like a doll," I reply; "she's very pretty, and ever so clever; and I should like her really very much—only——"

"Only what?" says Donald, lying down full length upon the floor, and leaning on one elbow, while he looks up at me, and throws back the hair from his brow.

"Only her mother talks of her, and for her, and so one gets rather sick of 'my little girl.' Do you think me very ill-natured, Donald?" And I bend down, and touch tenderly the dark head that I love so well.

"Ill-natured, my darling!"

And I find this is not safe ground; for Donald's manner of expressing his opinion on the point is demonstrative. However, at length we return to our "moutons," mother and lambkin.

"So the old boy is dead?" By this disrespectful term he designates the late lamented Major Vandaleur.

"Indeed, I only wonder that he lived so long!" And then the spirit of mischief enters into and takes possession of me. I make myself look as stout and puffy as I can, I blink my eyes like a dazzled cat, and cast them up to the ceiling; throw out my hands in a sort of helpless appeal to mankind in general, and speak in an affectedly piteous voice: "Only five short years of happiness were vouchsafed to me—it was my little all, my happy time. And then I was left—I and my little girl—to face the world together!"

A shout of laughter from Donald almost drowns the sound of a timid tap at the door. A soft cooing voice says, "May I come in, dear Mabel?" A tiny bonnet, all tulle and forget-me-nots, surrounding a fair fat face, is insinuatingly looking round the open door, and there—oh, cruel fate!—stands the affectionate relict of the departed Vandaleur!

Donald scrambles to his feet, looking anything but steeped in bliss at the sight of so charming an apparition.

"Oh, don't move!" cries the little lady, holding out two fat hands, so tightly encased in lavender kid that they look like lavender pincushions.

"It's so interesting! quite an idyl, you know! You must forgive me for disturbing you, but when I arrived at The Cottage last night, I heard the happy news; and I am so delighted to meet Mr. Forsythe quite sans façon, you know. I would not let Nannie announce me, for really I can't feel like a stranger, and you must not try to make me one!"

This last is said with sweet infantine playfulness, and a fat tight lavender finger held archly up at Donald. Nothing ever disturbs his quiet self-possession, and he returns her greeting with the utmost courtesy, and then excuses himself for quitting her society, on the plea of an engagement at Abbeylands.

"My dear Mr. Forsythe, don't apologise! A good son, you know, Mabel, makes a good—— But, never mind, I'll spare your blushes; and now let us sit down, and have a cosy chat—a 'coserie,' as they say in dear Paris."

I listen to Donald whistling softly as he goes down the avenue, I hear the click of the gate, and wish that Mrs. Vandaleur had seen fit to remain on that particular morning at her "little place." I even find myself beginning to wonder when she will go. But she has no idea of departing, for she nestles, like a stout sleek robin, into the corner of the wide, comfortable window-seat, and begins to peel her hands of their lavender covering—no other or more elegant word adequately describes the operation.

"Go on with your work," says the pigeon-like voice; "I can talk quite as well while you do so. You are wondering where Maud is, I know."

I have never even thought of Maud, and, not being an adept at prevarication, am silent.

"Well"—smoothing out her small gloves upon her knee—"she's coming up next week. The Mainwarings have tried their best to persuade her to remain with them all the summer; but, dear, sweet child, she said she could not bring herself to leave her dear little mamma all alone, and so she is to follow me as soon as they will spare her."

I don't think eloquence is my forte, for I only say "Yes" in reply. And straightway Mrs. Vandaleur rallies me upon my preoccupation.

"Ah!" she says, with a stout, comfortable sigh, "I know what it is, my dear. No need to fear a want of sympathy from me. Indeed, when I came in, just now, I was sadly, sadly reminded of——But, no, we'll not speak of past days; it does not do to dwell upon my happy time!"

Now, I have seen the late Major Vandaleur's portrait, and it is that of a stout, red-faced man, with a big, shaggy moustache, and a snub nose; and the idea of slender, dark-haired Donald reminding anyone of him is almost too much for my gravity, so I look steadily out of the window; but my attention is soon reclaimed.

"I hope, dear Mabel (such a sweet name!) that you are taking a step in life that will be for your happiness. Marriage is such a lottery; and it would be affectation on my part to affect not to know that you have some years' more experience of life than Mr. Forsythe. Still, dear, I say, do not let that trouble you; don't have misgivings. As I was saying, just now, to your Aunt Janet, whom I met in the Long-lane, such marriages often do turn out happily. Why, there was a captain's wife in my dear husband's old regiment——"

But I know of old, that if Mrs. Vandaleur drifts into reminiscences of the "old regiment," the task of bringing her back is a Sisyphean one; and besides, my heart is beating fast and my hands are growing cold, so I say, "Mrs. Vandaleur, I am sorry you said that to auntie; she has been very happy about Donald, and she is getting old, and has not been as strong and well as usual——" But my companion interrupts me.

"Very natural, very proper, very considerate." And the fat white hand is laid on mine, and gives me a horrid little squeeze that freezes my blood. "Your aunt is, as you say, getting on in life, and is, of course, happy to think you have found a protector; and, as I told her, there is less cause for anxiety in your case than there would be in almost any other similar one, for you very thin—pardon me, dear, I should say very slight—women have such an advantage over us; you look young, so much longer; and then, you have never had any colour to lose. Why, my little girl, with her wild-rose bloom, will look old—absolutely old—at thirty. I really think, Mabel, nobody, to look at you, would take you for more than one or two-and-twenty!"

She says this with her head on one side, like a contemplative bird. I bend low over my work, and try to guide my needle steadily. I feel goaded on to blurt out the truth:

"I was thirty this spring, Mrs. Vandaleur; but if Donald is satisfied, and Mrs. Forsythe——" But here I choke; for suddenly, like a revelation, comes back to me the remembrance of the cloud on that dear beautiful face as I drew it down to mine, and now, for the first time, its meaning comes over me.

The hard, bright, all-seeing eyes are on my face, and hold me like a vice, I feel them read me through and through; they take hold of the dark misgiving at my heart, and drag it into light.

"My dear," coos the maddening voice, "Mrs. Forsythe is a mother, and naturally feels as a mother; and we who have passed through the ordeal of married life know how great a risk disparity of years may turn out to be. I say may, because this seems almost an exceptional case. You may rely upon me, Mabel, as your friend; have no misgiving. I, my dear girl, will reassure Mrs. Forsythe's mind—I will plead your cause. I will, carelessly, as it were, speak of that captain's wife in my dear husband's late regiment——"

But the trodden worm will turn at last; and with all my heart in my voice I beseech her not to speak of me to Donald's mother. My very earnestness betrays the echo her words find in my own heart. She assures me she is "not at all angry at my distrust;" it is "very natural," "very sweet of me," to be so uncertain of my own attractions; and I begin to feel as though I were being smothered in black tulle and blue forget-me-nots, and as if there was no escape.

"Unwittingly—Mabel, you must know

it has been unwittingly—I have touched a sore place, and believe me, dear girl, when I say that this confidence shall be held most sacred."

What confidence? I have given none—nay, have none to give! I am getting bewildered, and a sudden pang of pity and sympathy comes over me for a poor fly, with green gauze wings, struggling in the web of a stout spider, in the corner of the rose-wreathed mullion outside. I think I know how he is thinking of the scented sunshine by the river, down among the meadows, and how nice it was to float about from flower to tree, where there were no spiders who spun nasty sticky webs, that it is so much easier to get into, than out of! Welcome indeed to me is a slow, uncertain footstep on the stair, and the sound of Aunt Janet's voice calling me.

With a sense of unutterable relief I spring up and open the door, totally ignoring a confidential look of secret understanding from Mrs. Vandaleur as I pass her. It seems to me I have never felt so tenderly towards that prim old face, and the straight up-and-down figure, with its faded green-plaid cloak, as now, when Aunt Janet comes in from her long walk, looking tired and jaded, and as much astonished as her even, quiet manner will allow, at my unwonted warmth of greeting.

Mrs. Vandaleur rises, and flutters all her draperies, like a hen rustling her feathers, as she says, "Mabel and I have been having a nice cosy chat, Miss Fraser, and time has passed so quickly, I have stayed longer than I intended."

"It was kind of you," answers Aunt Janet, "to call on Mabel so soon; and I'm sure she thinks greatly of it. I met the lad Donald in the lane some while ago, and he told me you were here; but I had to go and see Mistress Malcombe, who's not at all so well as I could wish, and that delayed me."

It soon appears that Mrs. Vandaleur has not only come to offer her congratulations to me on my betrothal, but also to inform us that on that day week she is to have a "little gathering" at The Cottage, and to bespeak the pleasure of our company on that occasion. We were accustomed to be bidden to two or three of these entertainments, during the time of Mrs. Vandaleur's yearly stay in Scotland; but now, the presence of Mrs. Forsythe at Abbeylands, and the advent of the young heir, made things in general of a more important and festive character than usual; and Aunt Janet gave me a little knowing nod and smile, which I knew conveyed a certain content in her own mind on the subject of the "new gown."

Talking all the way downstairs with much volubility, and even lingering on the door-step, to give a long explanation of Maud's present and future proceedings, and her expected appearance on the horizon of our village, Mrs. Vandaleur at length—I may say at great length—departs; and when I would make my escape to my own room, and think quietly over the new source of pain planted in my heart, auntie calls for a consultation on the subject of the neglected cap.

This important article of her attire is duly finished, long before the day of festivity comes round; but Aunt Janet, at the last moment, declares herself unequal to the exertion of going, and so it comes about that I have to go alone.

It is strange to me to notice these sudden prostrations of strength in one who had always scorned the idea of people "giving way," and been, I often thought, rather hard upon those who were "always ailing—one day well, and another ill; just thriftless bodies, no much good to anyone." I have begun to do by stealth little services for her that have become a matter of course, and yet more than anything else surprise me, and tell of some strange change in her; for her scorn of "people who let themselves be waited on and faddled after" is proverbial.

So I start for Mrs. Vandaleur's "little gathering," with some undefined anxiety clouding my anticipations of pleasure, as I take my seat in a curious sort of conveyance, which is our usual mode of locomotion on state occasions. It is a sort of light cart, that seems struggling to turn itself into a phaeton, and is drawn by a white pony with stiff legs, and a habit of whisking his tail grandly from side to side upon the most trifling application of the whip, without in the smallest degree accelerating his pace.

My Jehu is an old and trusty retainer of the house of Fraser, and seems to have undergone no visible change, in age or appearance, since my advent at Whitegates, more than twenty years ago.

It would have been natural enough for me to go with Donald and his mother in the grand Abbeylands carriage, but I had discovered, very shortly after my betrothal, that Aunt Janet was keenly sensitive on the point of being set aside, or "put past," as she expressed it, under this new phase of my life, and so I adhered closely to all the old-fashioned ways.

We jolt along over the country roads, our progress being sure but not swift; for though the whisking of the white pony's tail makes a very fine and spirited appearance, it does not materially add to our speed; and most of Mrs. Vandaleur's guests have arrived by the time I reach The Cottage.

When I come downstairs, after having doffed my shawl and dust-veil, the two pretty drawing-rooms are empty, the sound of gay voices comes in from the garden, and I set off to make my way thither, when the daughter of the home appears in sight, and I stand a moment to gaze upon a fair picture.

It is two years since I have seen Maud, and she has grown in beauty.

To-day she is dressed to perfection in a blue and white cloudy dress, made with all those countless puffs and furbélows just come into fashion; and this is looped up so as just, and just only, to show two tiny high-heeled shoes with glittering buckles. Her sunny hair is raised high upon her shapely head, and thence drops down in long shining plaits, woven in and out in wonderful golden tracery; and a small sailor hat of delicate white straw crowns the whole, and gives depth and shadow to a pair of the sweetest blue eyes ever man gazed into to his own undoing. If her figure, to a thoughtful mind, foreshadows dreadful possibilities of developing one day into somewhat of the dumpling order, one can hardly find fault with its full soft curves now; and the waist, bound by a broad blue ribbon, is slender enough to be graceful without any horrible compression. This lovely piquante beauty, like some fine specimen of Sèvres china, greets my not particularly delighted gaze, as I stand unnoticed at the open French window leading to Mrs. Vandaleur's "little garden," and I hear the voice of my hostess say:

"You do not know my little girl yet, I think, Mr. Forsythe? Maud, dearest, this is Donald Forsythe. I cannot make a stranger of you!" turning to my Donald with the old appealing gesture.

And Donald stands there, bareheaded in the summer sunshine, before that fresh young beauty.

At this juncture Mrs. Vandaleur catches sight of me, and hurries forward. "Forgive me, Mabel," she says, "I did not see you. You have not been here long, I hope? Such a lovely day we have for our little gathering! And it is too charming to think dear Mrs. Forsythe has at last been induced to leave the seclusion of Abbeylands!"

I glance in the direction she indicates, and there is my friend, seated on a garden-bench, and Maud, who has moved away, is stooping to place a rug beneath her feet, while Donald stands by, well pleased at the thought for her comfort.

The picture is perfect in every way. My plain grey dress, fresh and new as it is, and enlivened by a bunch of soft pink roses, grows suddenly dowdy, and finds no favour in my eyes; but my darling turns, and sees me, and comes rapidly across the lawn, glad welcome in his eyes and on his lips. The sun shines more brightly, the grey dress recovers its prestige in my imagination, and I look at my enemy's fat face, and smile with defiance in my heart and urbanity in my face.

"My enemy!" Yes, it has come to this—I have acknowledged to myself that she is that to me.

A croquet set is organised, and as I do not play that interesting game, I declare my intention of going over to Mrs. Forsythe, where Maud is still smiling under the shadow of the little sailor hat.

"You play, I am sure, Mr. Forsythe?" says our hostess; "and Mabel will spare you for a little while—won't you, dear?" turning to me insinuatingly.

But my hand is drawn through his arm.

"I don't know about Mabel sparing me, Mrs. Vandaleur, but I can't spare myself, for I'm not fond of croquet, and surely you have plenty of players already——" "You look tired," he says to me then; "come and sit by my mother in the shade."

So we saunter across the soft elastic turf, and I greet Maud, and she smiles, and is quite gushing in her greeting to me; and then the croquet-players claim her, and I sit beside Mrs. Forsythe, while Donald lounges at my feet.

Surely never was so fair a summer's day, such scented flowers, such sweet bird-songs from every tree!

But presently our hostess floats across to us, like a stout blue cloud, for Maud and her "little mamma" are always dressed in the same fashion.

"Fancy," she says, clasping her hands ecstatically, "Mr. Malcombe is actually coming here this evening! Isn't it too delightful?"

This is such an unwonted piece of dissipation on the part of my master, that we all laugh, and Mrs. Forsythe says:

"You work wonders, Mrs. Vandaleur, indeed you do."

"How sweet of you to say so!" she answers. "Have you really room?" for I have moved to give her a place beside us, and Donald has risen to his feet.

Pretty trills of girlish laughter come from the croquet party, for this "little gathering" at The Cottage has brought together many young people from far and near, and Maud's is not the only fair face here to-day—but yet the fairest; there can be no halting between two opinions on that point. Once Mrs. Forsythe turns to our hostess, and says:

"Your daughter is very lovely."

Mrs. Vandaleur dimples all over, and clasps her restless hands in ecstasy.

"Oh, Mrs. Forsythe, if you knew what that girl's heart is! her beauty is her least attraction! so unselfish! so affectionately considerate for me! I have, indeed, reason to be thankful. I often think, if her poor father could have lived to see—— But I must not let myself dwell upon such thoughts. How delightful it is to see young people enjoying themselves—don't you think so?"

This is said pointedly to me.

Nothing can be more deliciously suave than the voice and words, nothing more sweet than the smile with which the words are said; and yet I feel the colour rising to my face, and there is a sharp pain at my heart. But no one heeds me, for the croquet has come to an end, and we all adjourn to the drawing-room, and drink tea and eat cakes and ices. And then Keane Malcombe's tall lank figure appears at the door, and he is led by Mrs. Vandaleur down the rooms, in a sort of triumphal march. My dear old master—so simple-mannered, yet so full of gentle breeding—greets all the guests kindly, and yet (or so it seems to me) interposes a certain quiet dignity between himself and the effusiveness of his hostess. Soon the fading light outside is made to seem dimmer still by wax-lights, here, and there, and everywhere; our hats and bonnets are discarded, and the sound of the piano in the inner room is heard.

Rather feebly heard, truth to say, for a young lady kindly favours us with what she calls a "piece." Some one has volunteered to turn over; and Donald informs me, sotto voce, that he longs to fill that office himself, and turn over "two leaves at a time."

At length, with a faint twiddling in the treble, and a thump in the bass, the "piece" comes to an end, and the company utter many "thanks," perhaps for the cessation.

I am well content, for my own part, sitting by the open window, where diamond stars are shining in an opal sky, and Donald's dark head bending down very near me.

There is a general buzz of conversation, and I catch rather a weary expression on my master's face, and feel that he is wishing himself by "Lizzie's" bedside, and in the quiet study with his books and flowers, when the first notes of music worth the calling so come floating down from the upper end of the room, and my master's face lights up eagerly, while Donald stops short in the middle of a sentence, and looks towards the spot where a graceful figure in cloudy blue is seated at the piano.

Since that night, in my many wanderings in many lands, I have heard an endless variety of music and musicians; but I have never heard anything more beautiful than Maud Vandaleur's playing. There is no "turning over" to be done, no notes to be followed by an agonised eye that fears to "lose the place," no lurching about from side to side like a ship in distress; the white hands rest a moment on the keys, like birds poising themselves for flight; and then the stream of melody rises and falls, and melts from one key to another; soft, low, sad minors seem to speak with a voice that has almost words, and tears stand in my eyes, and blur the shining of the stars as I listen.

Deep down in my heart, amid all this beauty of sound, rises a strange passionate protest against some new sorrow coming into my life, something that those sweet notes herald in—and I look up to see Donald bending eagerly down to the beautiful pianist, and catch the gleam of the lights upon her golden hair!

SOME STRANGE REPORTS.

Saving half-a-dozen colonial exceptions, legislative bodies, all the world over, take pains to secure for their proceedings present publicity and permanent record; but whenever it has been suggested that our own Parliament would do well to imitate its younger sisters, and adopt a system of official reporting, the suggestion has been so coldly received, as to prove, if proof were wanted, that our public men are quite satisfied to leave well alone, and rest themselves contented with the gratuitous services of the press.

Assuredly they are in the right, even though reporters, not being infallible, do sometimes, with or without the printer's aid, make them say strange things. When the Artizans Dwellings Bill was in debate, its introducer was reported to have informed the House of Commons that "in Liverpool, when they found three or four rows of horses running down so many courts, they pulled down the middle row, and left the space open;" and also to have laid it down that "by good management, and providing proper currents of air, you may induce the population to turn out." After the bill became law, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking at the Lord Mayor's Dinner, was said to have expressed the hope, that in a few years' time the metropolitan authorities would be able to boast they had "cleared away all those great aggregations of politics, those plague-spots which were a curse and a disgrace to the city!" Of course, the Home Secretary had talked of rows of houses, and asserted that "by good management you may induce the population to turn out; and by widening the streets, and providing proper currents of air, change the whole character of a district;" while his colleague anticipated the dispersion of aggregations of people. Lord Carnarvon, if parliamentary reports may be believed, announced, without exciting the slightest sensation, that "a new ordnance" had been prepared, to ensure the more efficient protection of the coolies employed in the colonies; but we may take it for granted that Woolwich knows nothing of the matter. When Lord Salisbury declared his belief in the prize-winners of the Indian Civil Engineering College doing honour to their profession, we cannot imagine him adding, "and this is no doubt due to the preponderance of hops;" nor, although Mr. Gladstone was made to stand sponsor to the story, is it credible that a great artist averred of a lady of very high rank, that "if she had had a proper amount of technical construction," she would have been the first painter in the land. As readily may we believe in a defender of the militia calling it "that constitutional farce;" in an election orator lauding his candidate as a man having a greater stake in the country than "mere potatoes;" in a political leader telling his opponents, "You can't fight against the future. Tim is on our side!" or, on a Member of Parliament complaining that "even small-pox has its defence associations with vigilant committee breeches;" and when an evangelical clergyman edifies his flock with a sermon on the immortality of horse-racing, we may hope to see Sir Wilfred Lawson officiating as M.C. at a Licensed Victuallers' Ball, and look for the publication of Whalley's Vindication of Loyola, with a dedication to the French ultramontanist, who described the representative of Peterborough as "a maniac who has acquired a certain notoriety solely by his love of eating priests and his enthusiasm for the false Tichborne."

According to a morning paper's account of the doings of Convocation in 1875, certain petitioners were so badly posted in chronology as to assert that the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth ended on the 29th of January, 1848-9; and a resolution was proposed, running: "In the saying or singing of matins and evensong, baptisms and buryings, the ministers in parish churches, and chapels annexed to the same, shall use a surplus." For the one mistake probably the printer was answerable; for the other, he must be held blameless. Shorthand makes no difference between "surplice" and "surplus;" and the reporter blundered, through paying no heed to the context, in transcribing his shorthand into longhand. The similarity in the phonographic signs for gr and cr, betrayed a reporter into representing a speaker as accusing the English Church of making greed its first care; whereas he merely observed, that the Church made creed its first care, and education a secondary matter. No typographical casualty, no stenographic slip of the pen, can extenuate the transformation of "Mr. Disraeli, who towers above the rest of the Government like a giant among pigmies," into "Mr. Disraeli, before whom the rest of the Government quail like whipped hounds before their master;" or the turning of "the true meaning of civilisation is the extension of civil rights," into "the true meaning of civilisation is the extension of the circulation of the Echo;" while the bungling of the note-taker at the Dramatic Fund Dinner, who was so lost to propriety, as to represent Mrs. Stirling as oddly owning her anxiety to get into the boots of her auditors, and, through them, into their pockets, may fairly be adjudged guilty of being too intent upon honouring the toasts to be capable of doing justice to the speeches.

Mr. Disraeli, telling the men of Bucks it was not his habit to swagger, or to use ambiguous words in the streets, found himself accredited with assuring his constituents it was not his habit to stagger and use big words in the streets; when he said, "individuals may form communities, but it is institutions alone that create nations," he was set down as saying, "individuals may form committees, but it is institutions alone that create nations;" and a London paper puzzled its readers not a little by making the same master-speaker responsible for "A grand writer of antiquity, perhaps the finest, has recorded his conviction in Divine Providence, and his belief in universal toleration in the passage: 'Ego men oun rai tanta kai ta pant aei phaskoim an anthropoisi makanon theous oto de me pad estin en gnome pthila keinos t'ekeina stengeto kado tade.'" This was almost as bad as fathering upon Mr. Lowe the perverting of "Man from beast by words is known," into "Man from beastly words is known." To be unacquainted with Pope, however, is perhaps meritorious, since it has been lately discovered that the literary idol of England's Augustan age was no poet, or, at the best, a very bad one—a discovery as marvellous, in its way, as the geographical one of the Berlin journalist who kindly supplemented a relation of the wreck of the Schiller with the information that the Scilly Islands were a not very well known group in the South Sea, between Cook's Archipelago and the Society Islands; and proceeded to calculate the probabilities for and against assistance being forthcoming to the shipwrecked people from the neighbouring Tahiti, a port at which most European vessels call on their way home from America. A gazetteer might be as serviceable to our German friend as a study of the earlier works of Bishop Colenso would be beneficial to the vigorous arithmetician who recorded that the London School Board divided upon a certain question with the following extraordinary result: "For the amendment, fifteen; against it, eleven—majority against the amendment, three." A division being taken upon the original motion, the numbers come out quite as oddly, there being "For the motion, seventeen; against it, six—majority for the motion, eighteen."

The shooting of a wild cat by a boy five feet eight inches long; the erection of a school-building, large enough to accommodate four hundred pupils four stories high; and the fact of a man receiving a wound in the head, two inches long and some feet deep, and living to give evidence against the ruffian who "knifed" him, tell strongly against the notion that man has degenerated in size or endurance. But he would appear to have lost in gallantry if assault and battery can be justified on the ground that the passenger fortunate enough to secure the seat nearest a railway-carriage window has a right to "shut up the widows," whenever he feels so disposed; and if an Irishman is to be extolled as a hero for rushing into a burning school-house, and kicking out three widows, preliminary to throwing the children to the crowd below. That a good deal of anatomy was found in the body of a lady, about whose death there was something suspicious, is probable enough, although it would have been more to the purpose if the doctors had found a good deal of antimony; and as ladies were present upon the occasion, "objects of virtue," in all likelihood, figured among the curiosities on view at a Temperance conversazione. Elsewhere we read of two Jewish rabbits attending a public meeting; of three unfortunates biting the dust as their ship went down with them; of a Scotch sheriff awarding compensation to the tenants of Murtley Home Farm for damage done to their corps by the landlord's game; and of the friends of a once respectable woman guilty of defrauding charitable folks, urging in mitigation, that she had been for some days "sadly under the influence of chlorodyne." Doubting may be, as Lady Dunder says, mean and mechanical; nevertheless, we doubt if ever "the Holborn wood pavement was brought before the Board of Works;" a factory lad shaved to death in Lancashire; or a live surgeon caught in the Thames, and sold to the inhabitants at sixpence a pound. Spite of the feats of Miss Beckwith and Miss Parker, we discredit the story told of the foundering of an American schooner, when "the captain swam ashore, as did the female cook also, she being insured for fifteen thousand dollars, and heavily laden with iron;" and our faith in Darwinism is too limited for us to give credence to a modern instance of the development of species, chronicled in a West African journal, a year or two back:—"Roger J. Golsworthy, who went from here about three months ago, upon a mission from Captain Glover, to Ibadan, has become a magic-lantern."

The ubiquitous news-collector who lives upon calamities comes in for many a sneer for parading the over-worn stock phrases of his craft. What else is he to do?

> Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
> Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
> Figures pedantical,

are not for his humble pen. No editor would brook an infringement of Our Special Correspondent's prerogative. No "penny-a-liner," all forgetful of Morpheus, dared liken the Khedive's sleeping-cabin to a temple of Momus, or, grow eloquent upon the interment of "the last surviving marshal of the Empire" in the "consecrated twilight of Westminster Abbey," ignoring the fact that Sale's deliverer left two marshals behind him, and was not the sort of man to allow anyone to bury him while he was a surviving one. It is not often the penny-a-liner has a chance of showing what is in him, but we fancy we get a fair taste of his quality in the following bit from an account of the anniversary dinner of a Foresters' Court: "The usual hospitable and ample catering of seasonable and substantial sustenances, with true English successions, met the approbation of those who take Lincoln green as an emblem to emulate fraternity, providential motives, and true sociality, making the advent of each emulating annual an oasis in the prospective, in the advancing history of the Court."

In America, the reporter is a chartered libertine, licensed to misuse old words and manufacture new ones at discretion; free to be grandiloquent, funny, or slangy, at his own wild will. He is great at fires. This is his way of describing the burning of a grocery store: "The steam and hand engines rushed to the scene of the conflagration, but it was too late. The flames enveloped the entire structure, the Doric columns were tottering to their fall, the iron balconies were melting, the noble buttresses were a heap of ruins, and the French plate-glass in the magnificent windows was cracked and twisted by the fervent heat. The blaze roared through the halls, and the Mauresque ceilings, the jewelled chandeliers, the purple-velvet tapestry, succumbed to the furious element; at last the roof fell in, the heavy walls fell out, and nothing was left of the majestic pile but its ruins, reminding the beholder of the ancient palaces that line the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile." When the wall of a burning bank came down with a crash we are told that, "the fire-fiend danced with malignant joy in and about the rear portions of the stores and offices;" and when a similar fate threatened an Oswego homestead, "the red flames danced in the heavens, and flung their fiery arms about like a black funeral pall, until Sam Jones got on the roof and doused them with a pail of water." Down Iowa way the appearance of a news-paragraph beginning, "Yesterday morning winter and spring kissed each other in the sunrise, and each spread its choicest favours on the purple air," evoked a report that the journalist had just popped the question successfully, while a counter statement attributed the poetic burst to the author's having been bitten a week before by a dog, "the exact condition of the animal not being known at the time." Taste in Iowa inclined rather towards the brief and suggestive style of reporting, of which we have two good examples in—"The deceased, though a bank director, is generally believed to have died a Christian, and was much respected while living;" and "There was no regular trial in the case of John Flanders, yesterday. He had an interview in the woods with a few friends, and it is perfectly certain that John will never burgle any more."

If Lord Brougham really entrapped the newspapers into satisfying his curious desire to know what friends and foes would say of him after death, he deserved to meet the listener's proverbial fate. People of sufficient note to claim gratuitous obituary notice need not, however, be in any hurry to deceive the gentlemen of the press; they are ready enough to deceive themselves, and not at all compunctious about anticipating the end of public characters. Acting upon the principle:

> If a man won't let us know
> That he's alive, he's dead, or should be so;

they killed Livingstone over and over again, long ere man's cruelty to man ceased to vex the great-hearted traveller's soul. One morning the Standard announced, "with regret," the death of Eliza Cook. The Daily News thereupon followed suit with the information that "the once popular poetess," after suffering under softening of the brain for a long time, and recently from slight paralysis, had breathed her last at Deptford, where she had been living under the care of a female friend, appointed by the Commissioners of Lunacy to the charge. Nothing doubting this, some two thousand people flocked to the funeral, a few of the lady's more enthusiastic admirers forcing the church doors, that they might have the gratification of touching her pall; while Miss Cook, at least "the" Miss Cook, was enjoying the best of health at Wimbledon, in happy ignorance of what had befallen her Deptford double. It was but the other day that his golden wedding was celebrated by a nobleman, who, months before, had been laid in the family vault by the newspapers; and, let us confess it frankly, the writer of the article on the Suez Canal, which appeared in ALL THE YEAR ROUND a month ago, talked of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe moving uneasily in his grave two or three days after that nobleman had, in a letter to the Times, sufficiently demonstrated the fact of his continued presence among the living.

The late senatorial elections in Paris afford another curious instance, for the Daily Telegraph described M. Louis Blanc as looking as fresh as a boy, and slipping playfully under a rail in the voting-room, while, according to the Daily News, the great little Republican had to be carried to the scene of action, racked and tortured with rheumatism, on a litter. Still further to complicate this apparently simple matter, the litter becomes in the Illustrated London News a bath-chair!

To speak the painful truth, the art of making news is cultivated much too sedulously nowadays. Thanks to the unflagging invention of the clever but ever-ready writers, who "do" columns of tittle-tattle for the London weeklies, and London letters for country newspapers, it is our own fault if we do not know a great deal more about princes and princesses, ministers and men of fashion, authors and actors—in short, everybody who is anybody—than they know themselves!

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK II. CHAPTER VI. AUDREY'S NARRATIVE. UNCONSIDERED TRIFLES OF THE PAST.

"AFTER the pleasant beginning of our acquaintance already related, I saw a good deal of Madeleine Kindersley. I visited her in an unceremonious fashion at Beech Lawn, which was not too far off for my active walking powers; and she came, whenever the fancy took her, to the Dingle House. We were widely different, but we got on very well together, and her father evidently liked this association for Madeleine. His mind was easy about her, and he needed ease on that side of it, for as time went on it became plain enough that his only son caused him nothing but grief and disquiet. He did not take to the banking business; he had neither taste nor energy for any professional career. The share he was to inherit in the profits of Kindersley and Conybeare's would be enough for him in the future, and his father had not strength of mind to refuse to give him more money than was good for him in the present. Clement Kindersley was frequently away from home, and I know those absences were a relief to his father, who suffered about him always, but suffered less when Clement did not parade his dissipation, indifference, and disrespect openly before him.

"I confided my hopes and expectations about my uncle and my cousin to Madeleine, and she became vividly interested in the subject. Concerning London, that far-away city of delights, she knew almost as little as myself, for she had never accompanied her mother on her annual visits thither; and with Paris her acquaintance was of the superficial kind that a school-girl's would naturally be. Still she had seen fine buildings, and gay crowds—things out of my cognisance altogether; and her experience was a great advantage in my eyes.

"Only on one point was there any reticence on my part towards Madeleine Kindersley. I did not impart to her the little scheme respecting Griffith and his beautiful cousin—I had made up my mind that Ida was to be beautiful—which had occurred to Miss Minnie Kellett and myself. It was more of a vision than a scheme, and was certainly woven rather by fancy than by calculation; but I instinctively kept it to myself.

"My father liked Madeleine very much. She was shy of him at first; and one day she divulged to me, causing me profound astonishment by the revelation, that he had the name of being 'a little odd' in the neighbourhood. I suppose his home-loving quiet ways, and his inveterate habit of reading, which most of the people about would be very likely to regard as a disease, had laid him open to this imputation. It took me aback very much. My sensations reminded me of those which I had experienced as a child, when I heard baldness spoken of as a defect! Why, my father was bald! Odd, or not odd, Madeleine thought my father very kind and very pleasant, and he took pains to be so to her. Without the slightest shade of either jealousy or mortification accompanying the discovery, I found that my father could make a sort of companion of Madeleine, whereas he never thought of me in that light at all; that her gentle ways, soft movements, and quiet, interested intelligence suited him much better than my quick, noisy demeanour, and brusque, somewhat blundering manner of expressing myself.

"Madeleine Kindersley was not, I think, a girl whom people would have called, off-hand, decidedly clever; she was rather highly intelligent and appreciative, and so moved and governed by her affections, that it was enough for her to love anyone to lead her to apply her mind to the subjects which interested that person. Beyond a girl's liking for a pretty bouquet to carry in her hand, or a bowl of fresh roses to stand on her work-table, I do not think she had any special taste for flowers when I knew her first; but after a while she began to learn about them from her father and my father, and to take the liveliest interest in the gardens, which formed Mr. Kindersley's chief recreation at Beech Lawn, and the very humble collection of flower-beds that sufficed for my father's pleasure at the Dingle House. She had not previously had her attention directed to bees; but, when she found that I was interested in those curious insects, and the proprietor of a row of bee-hives—which would be utterly condemned in the present state of knowledge and cultivation of apiary science, but were very neat things of their kind in those days—she turned her attention to bees; she visited the hives, she read about the bees, much more extensively than I could be persuaded to do; she came to me frequently with some new and interesting bit of information concerning them. It was the same with everything in which Madeleine's intelligence was enlisted through the agency of her feelings; she became at once 'thorough' in it, where I was perfectly contented with half measures, or a bit-and-scrap line of action. And yet she was quite free from the dogmatism and the self-complacency which so often impair the worth and the beauty of 'thorough' in the characters of men and women. Hers was a nicely-balanced nature; nothing in it traversed or overset that incomparable characteristic, sweetness—the dominant note where all was harmony.

"Of that important member of the household, Mrs. Frost, Miss Kindersley made a speedy and complete conquest. If, at first, I had been inclined to resent Frosty's total indifference to the fact that I was grown up, I had sufficient sense to get over that grievance in the satisfaction which I derived from discussing with the faithful old woman everything which came into my life in the altered forms of it, and every indication of its further modifications. Frosty approved of Madeleine on her own account, and also as a welcome alternative to and corrective of Miss Minnie Kellett, of whom she had, if not a dislike, at least a distaste, of the kind which I have frequently observed to be entertained by very honest and downright persons of the lower classes, towards people whose position in life is in any way dubious or undefined. The dislike of the Irish peasant to the 'half-sir' is not stronger, or more instinctive, than the dislike of the Saxon peasant, or working-class individual, to the uncomfortable people who have seen better days, and are demi-semi-gentlefolk. Of all the specimens of that order of beings whom I have ever known, Miss Minnie Kellett was the most harmless; but that did not matter—Frosty never took to her. She objected to her ringlets, her lisp, her flimsy gowns, her bonnets, and her slight boots. She objected to her sentimentality, her gush, and her laugh. She considered that they were 'upsetting,' and upsettingness was the one thing which Frosty was wont to declare she could not 'abear,' though, in practice, there were other things of which she was equally intolerant. Madeleine was the delight of the dear old woman's life, and the theme of her constant praise. She had shown a discriminating interest in the poultry-yard from the first, and had not been at the Dingle House half-a-dozen times before she knew the names of all the hens and chickens, and even their respective ages—when the Duchess might be expected to sit, and the number of Lady Mary's last hatch. It was by her sympathy and adaptability in small ways of this kind, in which there was not the smallest spice of calculation, but the most perfect sincerity, that Madeleine Kindersley swiftly and readily won all hearts.

"With one exception—an exception inexpressibly provoking to me—there was some unaccountable prejudice against her, or objection to her, on the part of my brother; at least, I could not but think so, when I observed that the intimacy, into which my father's and my own first acquaintance with Madeleine rapidly ripened, did not extend to Griffith.

"My brother and Madeleine Kindersley met tolerably often. When she came to the Dingle House, in the daytime, Griffith was, of course, at the bank; but we had evening meetings, and my brother and myself were occasionally invited to Beech Lawn, when he and Madeleine sang together, as on the first occasion. At first, I could see that Griffith felt a little uncomfortable about these invitations. They were quite novel in his experience, and he did not exactly know how to reconcile them with the relative positions of himself and Mr. Kindersley. My father's never visiting at Beech Lawn did not count in the matter—he never visited formally anywhere, or informally, except at Despard Court. Even then, it generally happened that Lady Olive Despard espied him walking under the beeches and the elms, for which the Court was famous, and, waylaying him, beguiled him into the house. But there was a little awkwardness to Griffith, which not his own intimacy with Clement Kindersley, or the friendship subsisting between their respective fathers, could overcome. It had reference to Mr. Finlay, his 'senior,' who was never seen at Beech Lawn, with whom Mr. Kindersley was never heard to exchange any but the briefest and most exclusively business-like communications. I found out that my brother thought it rather odd that such a distinction should be made—for Mr. Finlay was a gentleman by birth and education—and I said something about it to Madeleine one day.

"'Why, what a funny notion,' she answered, laughing; 'I thought you all must know about Mr. Finlay. It would be perfectly useless for anyone to try to get him out of his shell. I have no doubt papa would be as kind as possible to him, now'—(she blushed, guiltily, at the emphasis she had laid upon the word, which meant, since the termination of her mother's rule at Beech Lawn)—'but it would only make him wretched. The only amusements in life he cares about are fishing and playing the flute; and he likes to do both quite alone. I wonder Mr. Dwarris has not found out that much about him, though it is just like what papa says of him, that he should not have disclosed even his principal peculiarities to the person whom he sees every day. I assure you it is entirely for his own satisfaction that he is left out of account.'

"Though they sang together, and consulted about their songs, and enjoyed companionship of that kind, as only musical people do enjoy the indulgence of their common taste, there was something in Griffith's manner, in the mere fact that he never set going any of my exuberant talk about Beech Lawn and its inmates, which made me feel that he liked the state of things less than I expected. He had a wise way with him sometimes, which I did not quite like. It was not a young man's way, I used to think, but savoured of those horrid things to which everybody must come, but would like to come as slowly as possible—middle-age and experience.

"Madeleine Kindersley possessed, among the other good things which adorned her life, a very pretty pony-carriage, in which she drove a sleek, sagacious iron-grey pony, called Cutchy. It was her kind practice to call for me at the Dingle House two or three times a week, and take me with her on shopping expeditions to Wrottesley, or nice drives in the neighbourhood; and it was on the occasion of his hearing me tell Frosty that I should wait to get something I wanted from the draper's, until I could avoid walking into the town, by going in Miss Kindersley's pony-carriage, that Griffith gave the first spoken intimation of his discontent.

"'I hope you are not getting lazy,' he said. 'You seem to me to be afraid to tire yourself now, by a walk you used to think nothing at all about.'

"'I'm not a bit lazy,' I answered, pettishly, 'and I have plenty of walking about here, and I never used to walk to Beech Lawn before, which I do now, very often. Why I should drag along that horrid, dirty Wrottesley-road, with mud up to my ankles, instead of going comfortably in Miss Kindersley's pony-carriage, I really cannot understand. But, I don't know how it is, Griffith, you never seem to like my being with Madeleine.'

"'What put such an idea as that into your head?'

"'Oh, nothing in particular; only you are never quite pleasant about it.'

"'Pure imagination, Audrey.'

"'Nothing of the sort. You are awfully

wise and old-headed, but I know what you mean, though I may not know why you mean it, and you don't like Madeleine Kindersley.'

"Griffith walked quickly away from me, for a few paces; we were on the lawn, and I saw that I had really annoyed him. Presently he returned, and said to me, in his serious way:

"'Do not be so foolish, Audrey. Why on earth should you imagine that I do not like Miss Kindersley? I suppose I'm not bound to go into fits about your friends. What I don't like, and what really does make me uneasy, is the fact that this new intimacy, and the change in your life it has led to, may induce you to acquire tastes and habits which you will not be able to gratify or sustain. It would be a serious error if you were to forget the distance which divides you and Miss Kindersley.'

"'Really, Griffith,' I replied, with some heat, 'I don't see that the difference between us is so very important. Madeleine is no better born or bred than I am; and if you think I am going to be either extravagant or discontented because she has a fine house, and a carriage, and ten new gowns to my one, I must say you have a poor opinion of me. What have I ever done that you should set me down as being so silly and so vulgar? Why did you not think I must be utterly spoilt by the honour of associating with Lady Olive Despard?'

"'Come, come, Audrey,' said my brother, giving me an exasperatingly confidential little push, 'you know quite well that is a very different thing; you are not likely to be put out of your place by Lady Olive. And if there were any such danger you would not go in the way of it. How often has she asked you to dine with her, and have you found out that you couldn't possibly?'

"I had nothing to say to this; so I turned sullen, and went into the house, making up my mind that Miss Minnie Kellett was right in her doctrine that all men, even the best among them, have a little corner of contrariety about them, and love to oppose the views and opinions of their womankind just purely for opposition's sake.

"The very next day Madeleine came in the pony-carriage, and we set off together, attended by the staid and decorous groom, who was especially attached to the service of Cutchy, and who was accustomed to interfere with grave effectiveness in the interests of that fortunate animal, whenever he perceived that Miss Kindersley's driving displayed any of the vices of that accomplishment, as practised by ladies. He had much respect for his young mistress on general grounds, but he admitted no nice distinctions in his unwavering belief that women never can keep their whips quiet, or resist 'fretting' a horse, that they know nothing at all of the qualities and facilities of roads, and invariably pull in or let out their horses at the wrong point of the hill. Madeleine and I would have preferred to dispense with the ministrations of James Bruce, but that was not permitted. We would have unhesitatingly entrusted ourselves to the discretion of Cutchy, but nothing would have induced James Bruce to entrust Cutchy to ours. I believe he regarded the elderly coachman, who had acted in that capacity to Mr. and Mrs. Kindersley since their wedding-day, with envy, chiefly because 'his' horses—a fat, steady, pompous pair they were—had no female interference to fear, or, as he expressed it, 'no woman don't meddle wi' his coach-box.'

"Madeleine was looking remarkably pretty that day. There was a wonderful soft bloom upon her, sweet face, and her steady, crystal-clear eyes were dew-bright.

"'What do you think?' she said, when I had taken my place beside her, and we were driving off with Bruce's invariable warning about the sharp turning in our unheeding ears. 'What do you think? Lord Barr has sent papa some wonderful seeds from his Java collection, and Mr. Lester knows all about them. He came out to breakfast this morning, and gave papa a quantity of information.'

"'Lord Barr? I thought he was not here just now?'

"'No, no; Mr. Lester. I had no idea he was so nice. I rather hate doctors. He's very good-looking, too, don't you think so?'

"'Yes; much better looking than Lord Barr; and he has a grander way with him, too.'

"'Why shouldn't he?' said Madeleine—she was called to order just then by James Bruce for the objectionable activity of her whip; 'he has an honourable profession, and works hard at it, doing good to lots of people; while Lord Barr, I suppose, has never been of any use to anyone, or done anything except amuse himself in his life. All that travelling about, you know, was only just for pleasure. I hate rich men and idle men, don't you, Audrey?'

"I replied with a hearty affirmative, and we pleased ourselves with the notion that we were decidedly radical in our opinions. For our precipitate judgment of Lord Barr we had not any grounds whatever; and it was exceedingly unjust; for the brother of Lady Olive Despard was neither idle nor rich.

"We drove on, and did our shopping at Wrottesley, without meeting any one of importance and interest, and, Madeleine having an appointment with her local dressmaker, I betook myself to the Lipscotts, where Madeleine, who had enlarged her borders in the way of visiting to an extent which would have astonished and horrified her mother, promised to join me.

"The tone in which the comely maid who opened the door to me—that 'private door' which Mrs. Lipscott and her daughters abhorred, because of its fatal reminder of the 'office' entrance—replied: 'Yes, miss, the ladies are all at home, miss,' suggested to me that something new and pleasant was in progress. I asked no question of course, but soberly ascended the solid, wide, well-carpeted staircase—whose carved oak balustrades had as much sturdy timber in them as would supply the whole wood-work of a modern contract-built house—to the handsome sitting-room, whose furniture and fittings excited Frosty's envy to an extent which she dissembled in grumbling and indignation.

"It was a very comfortable room under its most ordinary aspect—warm, well-filled, well-proportioned, well-lighted, and thoroughly habitable; and the comfortably prosperous look, which was the leading characteristic of the Lipscott ladies, harmonised admirably with it. They were all there when I entered the room, the mother and the three daughters, and their four comely faces were full of an unaccustomed and smiling content.

"Had Mrs. Delamere called upon them? Had Lady Olive Despard extended to them the honour of her acquaintance? Had Mr. Lipscott announced an intention to retire from business, and put a few miles of country road between them and the town? All these questions passed through my mind before I had made two steps within the door.

"I was very warmly received. Mrs. Lipscott even went the unusual length of kissing me, and Caroline and Fanny, the second and third of the girls, were quite kittenish in their gamboling salutations.

"'Oh, you dear thing, how nice of you to come,' said Caroline, as she placed me in the corner of one of the softest, springiest, cosiest sofas I ever sat upon, 'and just as Fanny and I were saying that we really must manage to go and see you somehow; though it is so difficult when there is so much to be done and thought about.'

"'Yes, indeed,' said Fanny, 'we were talking about you not ten minutes ago, weren't we, ma?'

"This was a family custom with the Lipscott girls. They all said, 'Weren't we, ma?' or, 'Didn't we, ma?' or, 'Haven't we, ma?' on every occasion, accordingly as the question suited; and though the iteration was perhaps tiresome, one could not quite dislike it, because it had in it so true an indication of the perfectly good terms on which the mother and her girls lived.

"Adelaide, the eldest, was less effusive in her welcome of me than the others; but the smiles of the mother and the sisters were reflected in her face, with the addition of a very becoming blush. I had always liked Adelaide Lipscott, notwithstanding her little sillinesses, but I had never thought her pretty until that day. Pretty she undoubtedly looked now, however, as she stood at a little distance from me, with her head bent, her cheeks flushed, and her fingers playing with her watch-chain; and a good half-dozen years younger than she had looked a little while ago—even so little a while ago as that Christmas party, at which I had seen Captain Simcox 'quite near,' for the first time, and experienced a dispersion of my illusions in consequence.

"'You are all very kind,' said I, 'as you always are, and I wish I could have come sooner, but a hundred things prevented me. But do tell me, dear Mrs. Lipscott, what has happened? Something has, I can see; and it's something good and pleasant, and I'm dying to hear it.'

"I do not know which of them told me the news, I only know it was not Adelaide—indeed I think Mrs. Lipscott, Caroline, and Fanny all told me simultaneously—but in another moment I was in possession of the cause of the smiles which adorned every face, beginning with the comely maid's. Captain Simcox had proposed, only the preceding day, to Adelaide Lipscott, and she had accepted him. The engagement was not much over twenty-four hours old, but news was a precious article at Wrottesley in those days, and the interesting fact was already tolerably well known. If I had chanced to see Miss Minnie Kellett, for instance, before I went to the Lipscotts, she would certainly have taken the edge off direct intelligence from its most legitimate quarter.

"'What a blessing you didn't go in with Miss Kindersley at that gossiping Rooke's,' said Fanny Lipscott, with edifying seriousness, as befitted the acknowledgment of a providential interference; 'she's sure to have heard of it, and we should have lost the pleasure of telling you ourselves. Are you very much surprised?'

"I jumped up and kissed Adelaide.

"'No, and yes,' I answered; 'I am surprised, because I am such a stupid goose about such things, that I did not think of it; and I'm not surprised, because I'm sure nothing could exceed his attention that night of your party. I did see that, though it was my first party, and I never, to my knowledge, was in the room with anyone who was in love before. But, though I can't make up my mind as to whether I am surprised or not, I am perfectly sure that I am delighted. Captain Simcox, too! How odd it seems, after all the talk we have had about him.'

"'Oh yes,' said Fanny, eagerly, 'and how awfully grand we used to think him; and now he's going to be only our brother-in-law, and we shall not mind him a bit.'

"'And when is the wedding to be?' was my next question, put with a directness which showed that in social matters I was still 'remarkably young.'

"Adelaide laughed, and looked at her mother, who said:

"'Well, dear, we don't quite know; you see they have only been engaged since yesterday, and nothing is settled yet.'

"'Oh yes, ma, dear,' said Caroline, who had wedged herself into the sofa beside me, and had a tight hold of my hand; 'we've settled one thing, and that is, that Miss Dwarris is to be a bridesmaid. You will, won't you, dear?'

"Adelaide followed up the request of her more impulsive sister in the properest manner, and I, to whom the mere idea of officiating in such a novel and delightful character was dazzling, had just said that nothing could give me greater pleasure, if my father did not object, when the door opened, and Madeleine Kindersley, followed by Captain Simcox, came in.

"A glance at Madeleine's face told me that she had heard the news at Miss Rooke's; and then I was a little amused at the awkwardness of the situation—awkwardness to Adelaide Lipscott and Captain Simcox, I mean, for the other two girls and their mother were wholly unembarrassed, and called the future son and brother-in-law 'Freddy' with perfect ease. Captain Simcox carried off the position very well, explained that he had met Miss Kindersley at the door, spoke to me for a few moments, and then addressed his fiancée with a very good grace. Madeleine and I did not make a long visit to the happy family, each member of which seemed to take the fact of Adelaide's engagement as a personal boon. Mrs. Lipscott left the room with us when we took leave, and assured me, on the landing, that she should never have desired anything better than what had befallen for her dear Adelaide.

"'Her papa'—this was the first time Mr. Lipscott had been mentioned—'would have liked more money. I don't mind telling you that, my dear, because I know it will go no further.' (The same communication was made to every acquaintance the good lady possessed.) 'But I say, let there be love and lineage, and the rest may take care of itself. And there's love and lineage here. Oh yes! the Irish Simcoxes—the Simcoxes of Carlow—a very old family, and most highly connected. Good-bye, and mind you come soon to hear all Adelaide's plans.'

"I should probably have remembered the day on which the first wedding with which I had any concern was announced to me, if there had been no other association with it which marked it in my life; but there was another association. The spring had begun, and we were looking for news from Mr. Pemberton. The news arrived by the evening post on that same day.

"It was I who took the letter from the postman, recognised it by the post-mark, and brought it to my father. It did not, however, resemble the first letter, for it was black-bordered, and the address was written in a woman's hand."

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PHŒBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER III. ADELAIDE CROSS.

YOUNG ladies at seminaries are addicted to friendships of the warmest and most extravagant kind, and the cynics of the school are careful to note when any of their companions exhibit this spectacle of affection. Nothing was more notorious in the daily life of the school than the faithful friendship and regard of Phœbe Dawson for Adelaide Cross.

The latter was a little taller than Phœbe, with a steady eye, a correctly-outlined face, and an intelligent expression. She was not one of the conventional cold girls; she could be agreeable and interested when she chose, and would have been thought pretty had she been less personal. At times she could be obliging, but there was a heartiness wanting in her.

Observing persons noted a "yellow smile" that passed over her lips. She sometimes tried to be popular with the other girls. She was subject to no impulses, did her duty, and was considered high-principled, and even religious. Of one of the girls she once reported a story which proved to be untrue, and it was recollected how she had entered the recreation-room, and in a hard, stoical way had made public confession of the wrong she had done. The Misses Cooke had "the highest opinion of her." She was their model girl, up to a certain period of her life. At that period her father, the Rev. Mr. Cross, canon of a cathedral, and whose name was faintly inscribed on the bark of an aristocratic tree, died suddenly, leaving a son and daughter in a state almost of destitution. This was unpleasant for the select establishment, for Miss Cooke shrank from anything like "want of means;" and the shifts of poverty were out of harmony with a place where scions of the nobility were entertained. Still, she was a just woman, and did not want compassion; so, after many councils, it was arranged that Miss Cross's education should be completed at the establishment, and that she should be "finished" with the rest, in view of becoming an assistant or aide-de-camp to Miss Emma Cooke.

This the principal, in her stately way, called "placing her on the foundation." Yet, strange to say, the pupil was not affected by such liberality. She became independent in her manner, and carried her head high. She assumed a haughty tone to Miss Cooke; she was jealous as to the style in which she was treated. The principal saw in her eyes quite a new expression, which somehow had the effect of making her not a little uncomfortable. Once, when this kind of bearing was duly rebuked, and a reminder had been given of her position, and of the obligations she was under, she promptly turned on her patroness.

"Is it your intention, Miss Cooke, that I should be a slave in this house, that I am to forfeit all self-respect, because of the bed and crust you allow me?"

Bed and crust! This was strange language.

"It was understood at the time," she went on, "that the matter was on a footing of business. You would not wish me to be humiliated in your house, to be seen going about bearing your badge and collar?"

"What language is this?" said the

amazed principal. "Nothing was meant but what was kind. You are ungrateful."

"I should be if I were to live this life any longer. I wish to be respectful and grateful. I am obliged to you for your kindness, and I want to show myself sensible of it. If I do not express myself in the proper way, allowance should be made, as I have had much to harass me. You have often told me I have an unfortunate manner."

Miss Cooke did not know what to reply. She said, rather wildly, "Everything has been done for you. You seem to me not to be sensible of your position."

"Then you wish me to leave?" asked the other, calmly. "Do you? I only want a word. I shall find some way of supporting myself. A clergyman's daughter will not want friends——"

Miss Cooke did not seek another interview of this character; and the young lady, having thus vindicated her position, continued in the new course she had begun. No further attempts at casting her for the part of drudge or dependent were made.

So painful a position, however, secured for her among the girls one ally at least, who championed her "through thick and thin," in the most chivalrous way conceivable. This was Phœbe, who admired her genius, her self-restraint, and the spirit she had shown under oppression. The vehement little agitator became a perfect incendiary in her cause, harangued clusters of girls on the wrongs of "poor Ada Cross," and during this particular crisis, eagerly proposed insurrectionary demonstrations, to prove to the authorities the real feeling of the school. She it was who suggested that every girl should wear a mourning ribbon on Miss Cooke's festival-day, offering to defray the whole charges; but she secured very few adhesions to the scheme. The main body of the young ladies were too genteel, too phlegmatic, to enter cordially into such violent measures, having mostly come of good Conservative families. Neither was Phœbe of the stuff suited to be leader of an insurrectionary movement. Her share in the intended demonstration reached the ears of the authorities, and for the hundredth time the last resort of "sending for her mother" was seriously threatened.

Her friend accepted this partisanship in the way she accepted most things, namely, as a matter of course. She thanked Phœbe with formality, and made some exertion to have the air of being grateful. But she felt she had no real feeling, and often lamented within herself that Nature had not endowed her with those spontaneous emotions, which are so useful as springs of action, and so effectually engage the sympathies of others.

When the news of the canon's death arrived, she could display no grief. Miss Cooke girded herself up for the painful task of breaking the sad intelligence to her, but Miss Cross received the news with a calmness that amazed the good lady. The pupil disdained any effort at an emotion, which would have been only hypocrisy; she accepted being set down as unfeeling, as the fair retribution and punishment for not possessing such emotions.

CHAPTER IV. PHŒBE'S DISCOVERY.

It was noticed, too, that Adelaide Cross possessed worldly wisdom beyond the capacity of her companions, and that by a number of small devices she contrived to gain certain petty advantages, that reached even beyond the walls of the school. Thus, when she was selected for "walking-days," that is, to attend a newly-arrived pupil who was allowed two days' grace before being submitted to the discipline of the place, it was noticed that Adelaide Cross had contrived an acquaintance with the parents or guardians, even during the few hours that they remained with their offspring. They somehow took away with them the impression of "having met a most intelligent girl" at Dido House, when leaving their little Amelia; so self-possessed, so full of sound sense; they were really quite surprised. Miss Cooke told them she was the daughter of the late Canon Cross, a man who would have risen high in the Church. So they were glad to find that she would be their Amelia's chosen playmate. If there was anything at all congenial in Amelia, Adelaide would make exertions to cement an alliance, and it once or twice happened that the Amelia brought home her friend with her to pass the vacation, say at Dingley Castle, or, better still, at Longlands or Shortlands, a description of seat which Adelaide found represented a more important class of county family than any other.

It will be thought that all this belongs to a vulgar order of artifice, to the transparent shifts of some revived Rebecca Sharp; but this would be a mistake. Adelaide believed that she was guided by principle, though she felt that she was deficient in feeling and emotion, the possession of which, by saving the trouble of deliberation or purpose, makes the general acts of life much easier of execution. Her position excited a certain interest in those about her; and every one felt that a girl who was forced to accept the drudgery of a teaching life, or else starve, was truly a victim of destiny that deserved pity. She was "chained to the oar," to use a favourite phrase of her own. Even Dean Drinkwater, who superintended the religious department, or deportment, of the school, made affable inquiries after her, and often "sent for her to the parlour," a species of honour which always caused a flutter in the young ladies' hearts, and was associated with events of importance.

Adelaide Cross accepted this general sympathy, but formed a fixed determination that during the short reprieve something should "turn up" that would "save her from the galleys." This was the one purpose of her life, and to this all her energies were directed. Time, however, was fast slipping by; there was as yet no break in the sky—and no prospect of such a break.

The "Exhibition Day" was now at hand, when company came, and "the parents and guardians" were admitted to their children's performance, and to see the presentation of the great Dacier medal, given annually for "general merit," much as the Monthyon prize for virtue is conferred. Languid preparations were going on for this great ceremonial, the performers in which seemed, as a rule, to be selected more for their showy connections than for their gifts. Miss Cross—whose relations to the Academy were concealed for the occasion—was, however, to be shown as the model pupil—a fine example of the finishing power of the establishment. She might be called on to recite, sing, play, suffer examination in French, German, and other departments, and this without any expectation of credit to herself. Phœbe always laughed at the Dacier medal; but she was to exhibit such ornamental smattering as her strength was equal to.

While these matters, however, were in train, a little adventure occurred which suddenly imported a dramatic reality of life into the finishing-school.

Intimate as Phœbe was with her friend, this relation seemed to consist of admiration on one side, and tolerance on the other. Phœbe felt that only a portion of Miss Cross's being was revealed to her. She was only privileged to know so much as the other graciously allowed, and Phœbe often felt that, within, there was another Adelaide, who, under conditions different from the tame life of a school, would hardly be recognised by her. Nay, even inside the dull and uniform life of the place, Phœbe somehow knew that Adelaide had a life of her own, apart, in which she found materials of a more important kind, and where she was engaged in unseen work of a greater dignity. This mystery was felt by the other girls also. Phœbe often wondered what it was that thus engaged the thoughts of her friend, and what were those majestic purposes, which had almost the air of missions, which seemed to be engrossing her. She would have welcomed any confidence, and was only restrained by a sense of awe from attempting to pierce this mystery, which, indeed, to one of her vivacious nature, was highly provocative. But Adelaide was one on whom no one dared think of spying.

One night the young ladies were assembled in their recreation-room, Phœbe acting as ringleader, and, as usual, showing an extraordinary versatility in devising or inspiring original games of romps. Her ringing, melodious laugh was heard from the centre of a group, as she unfolded some scheme more daring or grotesque than usual. A stick, or branch of a tree, was wanting for some illegal purpose, either to serve as a flagstaff, or as a bar to jump over, or, perhaps, as a leaping-pole. "Fun," of some kind, was to be associated with its acquirement; and where fun was expected Phœbe was certain, according to the Irish phrase, "to be to the fore." They were at a stand-still for this most necessary implement. Some one said that there was a mop in Adelaide's room, and proposed to fetch it; but Phœbe was opposed.

"No, boys"—she always thus addressed her jovial mates—"no, boys; we can't disturb her at her studies. Ada don't like it. No; I tell you what. Who'll volunteer for the garden? Now's your time, my lads!"

As usual, it was Phœbe who undertook the perilous expedition. But the police regulations were strict; after seven o'clock the doors were locked. Indeed, if there was a point which the Misses Cooke considered involved religion and morality, it was this—that any young lady who ventured into the open air after dark became compromised for life. This was one of the strictest principles known to the establishment, and might be said to be taught with the catechism. In defiance, however, of law and morality, Phœbe forthwith set out. She was assisted through the school-room window, which was raised noiselessly, and, wrapping herself in a black cloak, so as not to be seen from the window, hurriedly tripped down the walk to execute her purpose.

The walk was straight, and led to a little iron side-gate in the wall. Phœbe left the gravel walk, and made her way along the beds, to the grievous damage of the flowers, of which Miss Cooke made formal complaint next day to the chairman of the board of magistrates, demanding justice on the tramps who periodically robbed her garden. All was silent. Our Phœbe began her operations in the most deliberate style, casting about judiciously to select such a stake as might be best adapted for her felonious purpose. She had found what she wanted, when, suddenly, to her intense fright, she caught the sound of voices, and, shrinking behind a bush, peeped out to see whence the danger came. It was at the gate, where were two misty figures. There Phœbe saw a figure in white—beyond dispute one of Miss Cooke's young ladies—conversing through the gate with a young gentleman—tall—of actual corporal shape and substance! The amazing peril and excitement of such a situation made her heart beat, not with apprehension, but with curiosity and delight. Who could it be? There was that sly and much suspected Letitia; but this was too tall for Letitia. There was the handsome and romantic Amelia, whose effects had once been visited under search-warrant signed by Miss Cooke, being suspected of having "Paul and Virginia" concealed; she was saved by the generous presence of mind and devotion of Phœbe, to whom the work had been "passed" in an inspired plunge of agitation. But the back of the white figure did not look like Amelia. The voice—now she heard it clearly, and recognised it. Incredible!—it was that of the sober, unromantic, almost stoical Adelaide Cross! at that moment believed by the whole household to be engaged "grinding" herself up in the various branches, indifferent to recreation and relaxation, and only eager to secure the Dacier medal!

WRITING TO CONCEAL ONE'S THOUGHTS.

Not from everybody, of course; but from all save one chosen correspondent, or perhaps two or three let into a special secret. The Times has lately drawn attention to this subject in connection with an ingenious invention by Mr. A. L. Flamm (we hope the name is not ironical). In case the new invention should come into use, we may as well explain the relation which it bears to former systems of secret writing, cipher writing, or cryptography—three names for the same thing.

Diplomatists have for many ages been in the habit of corresponding in cipher, when their communications are of a nature intended only for the sovereign or ministers of their own country. There is a key or clue to render the cipher intelligible; each government keeps its own cipher, with its own key to unlock it; and—truth to tell—is not averse to getting hold of the key of any cipher used by a foreign government, if it can be done. Messengers, couriers, spies, scouts, in war time, sometimes carry secrets into or out of the enemy's country, at peril of death if captured. The writing is sometimes on small bits of thin paper, enclosed in a quill, and concealed by the carrier in some inscrutable way. It was by means of this kind that Havelock, Outram, Inglis, and Clyde kept up a scant and uncertain communication, during the eventful scenes at Lucknow, eighteen years ago. The most humorous and effectual mode of sending a cryptogram, perhaps, was that attributed to a Greek, in the old days; he shaved the head of a slave, wrote on the bald pate with indelible ink, allowed the hair to grow again, and sent off the slave; the correspondent or addressee shaved the head again, and there read the message on the pate! The slave carried the cryptogram, not in his brain, but outside it.

Writing with invisible or sympathetic ink is an amusing expedient, but scarcely secret enough for important communications. Many chemical liquids may be used as inks, to produce writing which is invisible until warmed before the fire, or until steeped in some other liquid. Two persons may exercise their ingenuity in this way. Each writes out an extract from a book, no matter what, in ordinary ink; then, with invisible ink, makes dots under such letters, and dashes under such words as suffice to make up the message. The addressee, on receiving the written extract, knows how to read between the lines, by making the invisible ink visible.

More frequently, however, the cryptogram is prepared by taking some liberty or other with the ordinary language in which you write—a liberty known only to you and your correspondent. For instance, you may write out your message, leaving spaces between the words at intervals, and then put nonsensical words in those spaces, so as to make the entire sentence meaningless; your correspondent will know how to separate the wheat from the chaff. Or you may comprise your message in the left-hand half of the several lines, and fill up the right-hand half with words which give a totally different meaning to them; this process requires, however, a good deal of tact. Or you may use all the proper words, but arrange them in a non-syntactical order, so as to destroy their collective meaning; you agree beforehand with your correspondent as to the precise mode of disarrangement, and he will use this clue in interpreting the gibberish you send him. Suppose your message to be "Do not communicate the fact to him until I have supplied you with additional details from head-quarters;" by a transposition of words according to a certain rule, this may become, "The until you details do fact I with communicate not to have from head him supplied additional quarters;" how much a stranger could get out of this, the stranger must say. Or you may agree with your correspondent that the message shall form a sort of square, the words exactly under one another in vertical columns; that some lines shall be read forwards, some backwards; some columns downwards, others upwards; some diagonally to the right, others to the left; some lines or columns skipped over, and brought into requisition afterwards. You may indulge in such dodges in great variety, always taking care that you and your correspondent agree on your mode of operation. Or you may melt many words into one, in the belief that outsiders would hardly detect your meaning when you say for instance, "Ishallnotbeattheofficetomorrow;" and may make it all the more obscure by reversing the order of the letters, "Worromoteciffoehttaebtonllahsi," a word that looks as if it would well suit a Zulu Caffre. Or you may offer a mare's nest to an inquisitive intruder, by placing the letters in their proper order, and then separating them at random into different words, perhaps with a capital letter here and there, as thus, "Is hallno TB eattheof Ficet omo RR ow," a somewhat mysterious affair. Or you may use the proper words, separated in the proper manner, but with the letters of each word (treated singly) reversed; in this way our supposed sentence would become, "I llahs ton eb ta eht eciffo worromot." Or you may place the letters in each word in the array called by children higgledy-piggledy; as thus, "I lalsh nto eb ta teh focefi romotrow." It is really curious to observe how utterly the appearance of a sentence may change under these different modes of treatment.

Anyone can see that this tossing about and overturning of letters and syllables may be varied in an almost infinite number of ways. It is found, however, that the secret may soon be wormed out by a little attention; and that more complexity is needed if the cryptogram is to be intelligible to the sender and the receiver only. A method of substitution is more available—substitution of one letter for another, or of a numeral for a letter. The variations are almost endless. Let our words (anything will do) be "Lord Dundreary and Brother Sam," and let us use, step by step, the next following letters in alphabetical order instead of the proper ones, as *b* for *a*, *c* for *b*, *d* for *c*, and so on; then the words become "Mpse Evoesfbsz boe Cspuifs Tbn," which would certainly be a "widdle" to the noble lord himself. Take the letters next preceding, instead of those next following, the proper ones, and the words present a totally different appearance, "Knqc Ctmcqdzqx zmc Aqnsgdq Rzl." Quite as unintelligible as before. The reader will not need to be told that the letter selected may be two, three, or more removed from the proper one in each case, and may either alphabetically precede it or follow it. Many of the queer-looking advertisements in the "agony column" of The Times and other daily papers are constructed in this way. A damsel and her swain not unfrequently do a little billing and cooing by this cryptogrammic agency, but it is well for the lovers to bear in mind that, once the key or clue found out, the message is no longer a secret; and it can without much difficulty be found out if the substituted letter is not many removes from the proper one. For this reason additional difficulties ought to be thrown in, such as some of those already noticed. All the letters of the sentence may be run together as one word; they may be separated into other words or apparent words at random; they may be reversed in position, each word separately, or the whole of them collectively; or capitals may be interspersed among the small letters, for the additional bewilderment of the uninitiated. And there is another wholly distinct course of complication sometimes adopted, of having one system of substitution for the first word, another for the second, another for the third, and so on. A decipherer, not up to the secret, if he succeeded in the first word, might be brought to a standstill at the second, by finding that the key he had used would not unlock the second door. If we had space, and the reader had patience, we might show how many other stumbling-blocks may be introduced in this machinery of substitution; but he can work out this truth for himself.

According to Cocker, 2 and 3 make 5; but in cryptography they may have a great number of equivalents. For instance, 1 may stand for *a*, 2 for *b*, 3 for *c*, and so on up to 0 for *j*; and these numerals may be used instead of these letters throughout a sentence, all being packed together as one word. Thus, for "Captain Webb, the Channel swimmer," we might say, "31pt19nw522th5381nn5lsw9mm5r," with which the swimmer would perhaps be more puzzled than with his swim. Or, the whole may be in numerals, using doublets after the ten single numerals have been appropriated. Or we may form a magic square of twenty-five cells, one for each letter —such as many schoolboys are familiar with in another fashion—with the five numerals running along the top and also down one side; each letter could then be represented by the two numerals at the top and side of the cell in which it stands. The outer world may further be thrown off the scent by giving to the numerals values known only to you and your correspondent; instead of the first ten letters being represented by the ten numerals in their proper order, the latter might assume the form, say, 5806371429—5 standing for *a*, 8 for *b*, and so on.

The cryptographic armoury is by no means exhausted by the use of letters and numerals; dots may be brought in as additional weapons. Thus, *a* may be used for *b*, but *a.* for *c*; *b* for *c*, but *b.* for *d*, &c. Some ciphers or cryptogram keys have been adopted in which dots have various kinds of significance given to them, according as they are placed over or under, on the right or the left of letters or numerals.

We have now arrived at a point where we may fittingly introduce Mr. Flamm, or allow The Times to introduce him. All the systems of cryptography above described may be managed without any mechanical apparatus. The two correspondents agree upon a particular key or cipher, known only to themselves; each writes down his message in accordance with this key, and each employs the key to interpret what has been written by the other. They want nothing but sheets of paper to write upon; the key, or clue, is a mental one, which can easily be remembered. Such systems, or many of them, are sufficient for all ordinary purposes; but the secret despatches written by diplomatists require more elaboration. All the principal governments are believed to employ experts in their foreign offices, men competent to cipher and decipher. Many—perhaps not that of England—are suspected of tampering with the post, to obtain surreptitiously a knowledge of the correspondence between the ambassadors and governments of other countries; and if a despatch is thus met with, written in an unknown cipher, it is the business of the experts to endeavour to discover the key to this cipher. Rather dirty work, certainly; but there is a good deal of dirty work in diplomacy, as our ambassadors have frequently had occasion to mention. The experts are professional men, who take a pride in their profession; each endeavours to discover the keys of all the others, and to keep his own secret from them. Cipherers and decipherers present some analogy to the makers of armour-plates and the makers of Woolwich Infants, endeavouring to produce plates that will resist any guns, and guns that will smash any plates.

The "dictionary" system is employed with much success, if carefully managed. Here the apparatus consists of two copies of the same edition of the same dictionary, one for each correspondent. The sender of a message proceeds word by word, not letter by letter. If he begins with "The," and finds that this word is explained in line 17 of page 347 of the dictionary, he writes down 347·17; if his next word is "book," and he finds this word explained at line 26 of page 63, he writes down 63·26; and so on—everything being written in figures or numerals. The addressee, on receiving this message, opens his dictionary at page 347, and finds that the 17th line relates to "The," which he at once infers is the first word of the message; and so on to the end. If the dictionary is not one in common use, it would be very difficult for an uninitiated person to guess or to find out which had been employed; and until he does find out this, the cryptogram will remain a sealed book.

The late Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort devised a useful card—which, after his decease, was published at a low price—for carrying on correspondence in a way which we should have thought would baffle any outsiders whatever. The card is full of alphabets, arranged in various ways; one letter is substituted for another, in writing the message; the kind of substitution perpetually varies; and a key-word, known only to the two correspondents, shows in what fashion this variation takes place. The key-word and the card are used together, both by sender and receiver.

Mr. Flamm employs tablets instead of a card. We have spoken above of "baffling any outsiders whatever;" but if the outsider is a diplomatic expert, scarcely anything baffles him. Mr. Flamm, during the Crimean War, acted with the British army as interpreter to the corps of Royal Engineers; and some years afterwards he was secretary to the Turkish president of the European Commission on the navigation of the Danube. His experience in those capacities taught him that foreign experts can ferret out almost any cipher hitherto devised. He set about constructing a system so inscrutable that the chances would be millions or billions to one against a right guess being made by an outsider. He has devoted years to the subject, and completed his invention only a few months ago. The German, Swiss, and Servian governments already employ it, and so do the police authorities at Vienna.

The Times' description is too long and too elaborate to be given here; but the principle of action may be made intelligible in briefer form.

A square tablet is divided by vertical and horizontal lines into cells or squares; and around the edge is a raised rim, marked with figures which denote the several columns and lines of squares; a metal plate exactly fits on the tablet, and is similarly divided into squares. Some of these squares in the plate are punched with round holes, in each of which one letter could be written by pen or pencil; the punching is quite at random, so far as concerns the selection of the particular squares punched. The plate is numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, at the four corners. In writing a secret message with the aid of this apparatus, a sheet of paper is laid upon the tablet, and the plate upon the paper, with No. 1 at the left-hand upper corner. The message is written, letter by letter, through the punched holes, until every hole contains one. Then, without disturbing the paper, the plate is turned a quarter round, until No. 2 is at the left-hand upper corner; the punched holes thereby present other spaces, in each of which a letter is to be written. And so with No. 3 and No. 4 at the left-hand upper corner. The result of this is, that all the words of the message are written down by degrees; but the letters of one word are mixed up with those of others in a way quite unintelligible; in fact, the whole message comes out as one long word, the letters of which form horizontal lines and vertical columns, but present no syllabic, grammatic, or syntactic relation whatever. The paper is sent to the addressee, who is provided with an exactly similar apparatus. He places his perforated plate upon it, with No. 1 at the left-hand upper corner, and reads so much as is visible through the holes; then shifts it to the other three positions in succession, and reads the rest of the message.

Modifications for special purposes are easily made in the apparatus. One is suitable for transmitting a cipher-message by wire or cable, a curious combination of cryptogram and telegram. Others will add further secretiveness to that which already is secret to an amazing degree. The plates are (we infer) cheap, and easily punched. A new one can be substituted at any time, by agreement between the correspondents; and if the punched holes follow a different arrangement, the cipher becomes at once a new one, towards the elucidation of which the former plates afford no clue whatever. A square sheet of cardboard, called a graphic table, guides the punching; and Mr. Flamm states that he can, by its aid, punch a small plate in four thousand seven hundred trillions of different ways—rather a neat number, as schoolboys and old boys will alike admit! He plans the larger forms of apparatus for diplomatic purposes; while a smaller and simpler size, though secret enough, in all conscience, is intended for the use of bankers, merchants, public companies, shippers, and traders of various kinds, to send, either by letter or by telegram, messages which can only be understood by the senders and the addressees. A dozen firms may employ apparatus exactly alike, except in the one critical point of the mode of punching the holes; which is, in each case, known only to those whom it may concern.

Since the above was written, public attention has been drawn to the fact that, nearly forty years ago, Mr. William Henry Rochfort described an "Arcanograph," resembling very closely Mr. Flamm's "Cryptograph." It had perforated plates, to be placed on a tablet ruled into small squares; a piece of similarly ruled paper was placed between them, and the writer wrote his message on the paper through the perforations, one letter to each. By turning each plate over and round about, the writer covered the paper with a maze of letters, having no meaning to anyone but himself and his correspondent. Like all such inventors, Mr. Rochfort claimed for his system that it would "defy discovery or detection."

Writing to conceal one's thoughts. Well, cryptography means this—to conceal from all save a selected number of persons.

SNOWDROPS.

I HAD fair hopes the summer long,
And every day I walked among
The brightest flowers that grew;
I wore them on a happy brow,
And o'er an idle heart that now
Has work enough to do.

Came autumn, all my hopes were fled,
And all my many flowers were dead;
Came winter with its snow.
The flowers were buried out of sight,
The garden beds were bare and white,
Bleak, bitter winds did blow.

And all that dreary winter time,
My hopes lay buried in the rime
And snow of bitter grief;
I wept the end of happy hours,
I wept because love's scented flowers
Had withered, bloom and leaf.

But ere the March wind called aloud,
While yet the earth wore snowy shroud,
I found a fairy ring;
A little circle, green and white,
Of snowdrops, welcome to the sight
As messengers of spring.

And I was 'ware that in my heart,
An olden pleasure claimed its part,
That sorrow could not slay;
My life-long love of lovely flowers,
And half the care of winter hours
That morning passed away.

The summer flowers were buried low,
By winter winds in early snow,
But spring doth all restore;
So hopes like those I counted lost,
Because they withered in the frost,
May come to me once more.

Not my lost blooms, but other flowers
As beautiful, shall clothe the bowers,
And garnish wood and lea.
Not my lost hopes, but others sweet
As those of old, and more complete,
May come in time to me.

Not my lost dream. I am awake,
And watching eyes fear no mistake,
But worthy aim and deed.
Not my lost love, for it is dead,
Shall I again wear roses red
That make my bosom bleed?

I think not so—I think my heart
Will choose a meeker, safer part,
And with contented mien,
Pass passion-flower and roses by,
And pluck beneath life's clearing sky
Its snowdrops, white and green.

KEANE MALCOMBE'S PUPIL.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IV.

AUTUMN in Scotland is a beautiful season—the cranberry and the scarlet rohan make the woods fair, while the dying ferns glow with every shade of golden brown, almost rivalling the colours of a Canadian "fall." I love to deck the drawing-room at Whitegates with these pretty fronds and shining red berries, but this year fern fronds grow golden, rohans red, and yet they are ungathered by my hand.

Whitegates is silent and dreary, for its mistress lies on a sick bed, and hushed voices are heard; while footfalls steal softly up and down the low broad stairs. Nannie and I look gravely in each other's faces, and wonder when this trouble will be lifted off our hearts.

Ah! what a great deal I would now give to be scolded for making "snippetings" on the carpet—to hear Auntie wage war against the faintest suspicion of dust! What would not poor Nannie give to have the mistress "worriting" in the kitchen again! What would not any of us give, my friends, to have back again the trifles that most tried and annoyed us, if they were caused by one dear to us, and that beloved one has drifted from us, and will never try our patience any more?

Oh for the hasty word, the cross look, that tried us so sorely at the time, for with them we have lost the close hand-clasp, the loving, penitent smile that strove to make up for both!

Aunt Janet had been methodically well all her life, and she is now methodically ill. The blind in her room has to be lowered to the exact division of the narrow window-pane; the medicine-phial placed precisely in the centre of the little table by her bed-side; and she lies, patiently suffering pain and weakness, neatly clothed in a blue-and-white knitted shawl, and smoothing with her feeble hands every chance crease in the snow-white quilt of her bed. Day by day, in uncomplaining feebleness, she passes away further from us, distressed if her medicine is a few moments delayed, and drawing my head down to whisper the word "dust" in my ear, and point with her thin worn hand to some neglected spot where a sun-ray makes the gathered dust visible; but joined to all these old characteristics is a new strange tenderness to me. One evening, when I am sitting by her side, and have laid the big Bible down upon the bed, because the light has grown too dim for me to read, she puts her hand up to my face, and softly pats my cheek, saying to me:

"I have loved you more than you think for, dearie!" The sweet Scotch word sounds very tenderly in my ears, and I feel tears starting to my eyes, as she goes on speaking in the voice that has grown so feeble, and used to be so clear and strong. "We Frasers are not a people that say much, child; but I've loved you well, for all that I may have seemed hard now and again. God shield my lammie from harm!"

Things had not come to this pass without a struggle. Long had the brave lady striven to fight against growing weakness and wearing pain; till at last, one morning, Aunt Janet declared she had better "lie by a bit;" and Nannie came to my room with an expression of countenance which in any other household would have meant that the kitchen chimney was on fire at the least; for indeed it was a strange thing for "the mistress" to give in like that! So dear kind Auntie is "lying by a bit" still.

Once I had hoped that rest would restore some of her lost strength, and I was angry with the village doctor that he did not seem to agree with my opinion. I even tried to tell Aunt Janet how I longed to see her about again, and how the empty chair, and the knitting-pins lying idle on the little table by the window, made me feel so very sad and lonesome; but she shook her head.

"I never held with people fiddle-faddling over things, child; and if you're to lay by, why lay by all at once, and don't be up one day and down another, upsetting the house with not knowing your own mind."

I think to myself with a chill foreboding, "Is Aunt Janet laid by for always? is she going to leave me? is God going to take her from me?" And as I think these thoughts, a rush of bitter self-reproach comes over my heart, for I know I have not valued her enough.

The morning after that one in which I have vainly tried to persuade her to leave her room, I come upon Nannie, sitting by the kitchen-table, with her apron over her head, and when she hears my step and uncovers her face, it is all blurred with tears.

"Why, Nannie," I say, "dear old Nannie, what has happened to you?"

"I've bin peeling onions, Miss Mabel; and when once yon vegetables sets me going, I get thinking of all kinds; and the house seems lonesome wi' no one to worrit me, or find a fault wi' the place not bein' so tidy as it might." Here Nannie makes for the door leading out into the little wash-house, and when she has got this door partly open, she says, not looking at me the while: "It seems too as if Master Donald don't come so often now to brighten the old house wi' his bonnie smile; and the deil puts bad thoughts in a crooked old head like mine, Miss Mabel—Lord forgie me!" With this the door closes smartly, and Nannie is gone.

Hitherto I have hardly dared to ask my own heart what other source of sadness, beyond and underlying all my anxiety about Aunt Janet, is with me day by day and hour by hour; but even as Nannie's faithful voice had been the first to put into words the vague, delicious sweetness that had stolen into my life, so now it was left for her to set before me, in tangible form, the bitter truth that I had lacked courage to define. Shrinking and quivering under Nannie's words, I do not, dare not, stop to set my trouble yet more plainly before me, and to look it in the face. To-day he has promised to come—Donald, my Donald—and I shall feel the clasp of his dear arms, and his loving kiss upon my lips!

Slowly the long hours pass, and at length it draws near the hour that he will come. Summer has lost a day, and left it behind her, it seems to me, so warm, and still, and sunny is this bright afternoon. Insects chirp and buzz in the grass, under the pleasant delusion that summer is beginning again; birds sing in every tree, as I watch for my darling; listen for the quick step up the lane, and the click of the white gate. But my fingers grow weary of working, and the shadow of the great dark fir lengthens out. Twice I have been to Auntie's room; twice the weak voice—oh how weak it grows!—has asked: "Is the laddie nae come?" Twice I have answered, with determined hopefulness, "Not yet," as though his coming were but the question of a few moments' delay. But there is no footstep, and the gate-latch makes no sound.

I am becoming a living, and very striking example, of the truth of the Psalmist's assertion as to the effect of "hope deferred," and feel cold and miserable. I call Nannie to light the fire, and wrap myself up in a big soft Shetland shawl, that Donald had christened the "grey cloud."

"It's cold you are, my lammie," says my dear old nurse, falling into the child-name unawares; and her keen grey eyes look anxiously into my face, as she folds the grey shawl closer around me, and coaxes the fire into a cheery blaze. I am glad, though, when Nannie goes, for I have an uncomfortable feeling that she knows me for a vain watcher.

When it is quite dusk, he comes.

I hear his step; the well-known knock, which Nannie answers so promptly, that I feel convinced she has been keeping a private watch of her own, from the little narrow window by the hall-door; then the quick run up the low broad stairs. But I sit quite still. Some strange presentiment of evil is over me; I shrink from some nameless pain that is coming.

"Are you very angry, Mab?" And the dear hand I love is laid upon my shoulder, the dear bright face bends down to look into mine. "Are you ill, Mabel? What is it?" he continues, as I do not speak. "You are shivering, in spite of the 'grey cloud.'"

I feel like some tired and weary child, and, as he stands behind me, I rest my head against him, and say:

"No, Donald, not ill; only——" Then something rises in my throat, and chokes me, and I stop.

"Only cross?" he suggests, not moving from me, but without the least caress.

"No; only tired, very tired," with a weary emphasis on the "very."

He turns away from me, and stirs the fire into a blaze.

"Don't be hard upon a fellow, Mab," he says, after a rather awkward silence. "I'll never do it again; I'm awfully sorry. What! You won't speak?" And he kneels down beside me, and catches my two hands in his.

All his old power over me is asserting itself. I feel a smile trembling round my lips, and am ready, as the children say, "to kiss and be friends." He looks at me with laughing eyes:

"Ah! Mab, you can't be angry with me, long. I didn't mean to break my promise; but the time passed quickly, and she—I mean, Miss Vandaleur, you know—played divinely; and really, Mab, you mustn't be too hard upon me. You should remember, 'boys will be boys.'" And he laughs uneasily.

I start as though some venomous thing had stung me; I throw my arms about his neck; I hold him so that I can look into his eyes.

"Donald, tell me, oh my darling, tell me, who told you to say that to me?"

There was no guile in that pure young nature. He answered me at once, though with a hot flush upon cheek and brow.

"She only said it in jest, Mab; it was Mrs. Vandaleur."

"Who is taking my name in vain?"

And the firelight shows me a round fair face, smiling at us from the open door, and a playful finger held up in affected displeasure.

The Frasers may not be people who "say much," but at all events they are not deficient in pride, and in a moment I have forcibly calmed my troubled looks, and risen to bid our most untimely visitor "Good evening."

"We have parted so short a time since," she says, smiling at my Donald, "that it is hardly needful to say 'how do?' is it? My anxiety about our dear invalid was such," she continues, holding my unwilling hand in both hers, "that I gladly accepted Mrs. Forsythe's offer of a seat in her carriage as far as Whitegates. How is Miss Fraser to-day?"

The horrible emphasis Mrs Vandaleur puts upon little words, here and there in her conversation, seems to irritate every nerve in my body, and I am glad to get out of the room on the plea of going to see Mrs. Forsythe.

As I close the door I hear a low soft laugh, and catch the word "truant;" and I know that my enemy is rallying Donald on my supposed displeasure.

Mrs. Forsythe is sitting by Aunt Janet's bedside, and turns to me as I enter the room. Her face is as fair to see as ever—as nobly, grandly beautiful—and kindly enough; but the old fond love that used to greet me is never there now. Day by day some shadow between us deepens. No longer are those long sweet talks in the gloaming welcome as of yore; and why? How often, as I lie awake at night, do I ask myself that question? But I cannot tell how it is, that this strange barrier has imperceptibly arisen between her heart and mine. Have you ever seen a bee, trapped in the inside of a room, puzzled as to why he cannot fly into the warm sunshine, outside? He can see no wall between himself and the great scented honey-laden flowers bobbing against the windows so close to him; but for all that, there is something strange that holds him back, and he buzzes and flutters, and bruises his little shining head against the glass; but, for all his efforts, he is as far as ever from getting back to the sunshine among the flowers?

It was so with me.

I could give no name to the estrangement between my first, best friend and myself, and yet it was there. I knew that in her noble nature there could be no place for that petty jealousy of the woman her son loved, which can only arise where affection is but selfishness disguised. I knew that her son's happiness and welfare were far dearer to her than her own—far dearer than life itself. If, then, Donald loved me, and my love could make him happy, who could rejoice more truly than the mother to whom he was so dear? Strangely enough too, this estrangement on Mrs. Forsythe's part seemed to extend to Aunt Janet, and was shown in a hundred little ways, that roused me to stand on the defensive; for it seemed that of late all the love and care of past years had grown dearer, and gained a new value in my eyes, as I had learnt to see them through a truer, clearer medium. At times, it seemed to me, my old friend tried to cast aside this constraint, and to return to the dear old happy loving ways of old. And now, as I stood by Auntie, and stooped to kiss the wan white face upon the pillow, she looked from one to the other, and I think for the first time realised how dear Auntie and I had grown of late to each other; for she smiled, and gently took the worn hand lying on the coverlet into her own.

"I'd be put poorly off if it weren't for my dear true lassie here, Mistress Forsythe," said Aunt Janet, and then the old cloud came over the beautiful proud face, the smile died away, and Mrs. Forsythe's voice was full of pain, as she replied:

"We cannot value too dearly those who are really true and candid of heart—true candour is rare, Miss Fraser!"

I saw Auntie's keen, sunken grey eyes glance curiously at her face, and then at mine, with a wondering look; and then and there I resolved that so long as Heaven might spare my dear sufferer to me, so long would I shield her loving heart from any knowledge of the strange unknown evils that seemed gathering about her child. I threw off the depression that would have held me silent. I talked and laughed, and made Auntie laugh too, and when Mrs. Forsythe and I returned to the now darkened drawing-room, I abated nothing of my gaiety; and at the last, as the carriage drove down to the white gate, I stood at the hall-door, and kissed my hand merrily to Donald, looking back on me with rather a puzzled expression in his dear handsome face, for I daresay he thought me oddly changed since I sat, pale and weary, wrapped in the "grey cloud."

The day following there was to be a dinner party at Abbeylands. Now a dinner party at "the great house" is an event—a sort of thing that makes our village hold its breath, in awe and wonder at the doings of the great folks. Naturally Nannie enters into the general excitement, and refuses to be comforted, when I tell her that I have made up my mind not to leave Aunt Janet to go to the dinner, but only to join the festivities later in the evening.

"It's just daft ye are, Miss Mabel, to think of doing the like," says Nannie, with an indignant toss of her head. "I'd like to know who took care o' the mistress before ye cam' to Whitegates? And as to going after all the good things is eaten, why it's like eatin' the rind of a pear, and having nane o' the heart of it. And that bonnie gown just new too! Why it's a sin and shame to think of it!"

"But, Nannie," I say, smiling at her vehemence, "the new gown will be seen just as well in the evening; and, besides, it won't be crumpled with sitting squeezed between two people all through dinner."

"Well, well," says my faithful retainer, "there's something in that; but I tell ye what, Miss Mabel—if the master were home, in place o' wandering about in a' kinds o' barbarous countries, he'd see that ye went, and enjoyed yourself wi' the best o' them."

Now the "barbarous country" into which my master had wandered was England, and he had gone to attend the sick-bed of a brother. Thus, when most I needed the help and comfort of his guiding hand, the loving counsel of his faithful words, both were set far from me.

* * * * *

Come into the garden, Maud, I am here at the gate alone!

These words, in Donald's rich sweet tenor, are the first sounds that greet my ear as I enter the Abbeylands' drawing-room.

Miss Vandaleur is playing the accompaniment, and her mother, with her head very much on one side, is watching the performance, with an expression of countenance that seems to appeal to society in general to pardon the warmth of a mother's feelings, and excuse her being slightly agitated in consequence of these emotions.

Mrs. Forsythe, half reclining on a sofa at the end of the room, looks pale and weary, and as she holds out her hand, and draws me down to her side, there is more of the old tenderness in her face than I have seen there for many a day; but what is that expression in her eyes, mingling with the old love? Is it—can it be—pity? She still holds my hand in hers, and asks me softly about Auntie, and how I have left her. Something seems to blur my sight, meeting hers, and I look away as I answer. Our whispering has been heard, and Mrs. Vandaleur turns a sweet, reproachful look upon us, a sort of "how can you?" which effectually silences us.

Come into the garden, Maud!

How his voice lingers and thrills on the last sweet word! No wonder the fair head, with its crown of golden plaits, sinks lower over the deft white fingers!

Maud, Maud, Maud!

Will the song never end? Does he know I am here, listening to every note, marking the passionate pleading tones that linger on her name? What of the scent of the sweet-briar and the low song of the river, as he kissed me in that far-off happy time?

The black bat night has flown!

Nay, rather some thick darkness is gathering about me, and shutting out the light of the very sun itself!

Was there some terrible anguish written in my face that touched the heart of my old friend? I know not; but she rose hastily, and whispered to me:

"I am ill and tired. I must go to my room, Mabel, for a little rest and quiet. No, do not follow me; ask Mrs. Vandaleur to do the honours for me."

And she noiselessly left the room.

CHAPTER V.

Do any of us know the height, and depth, and fulness of our tenderness for a thing, until the dread of losing it falls upon us like a dark shadow? Was ever the beloved son, the only son Isaac, so dear to the heart of the patriarch, as when he bound the lithe young limbs to the horns of the altar, and laid the boyish head down on the sacrificial wood? Was ever Donald so inexpressibly dear to me as when I resolved, with my own hand, to dig a grave for the love that had grown to be the very core and heart of my life?

Mrs. Forsythe's party is over at last, and she has returned to the drawing-room to speed her parting guests. I have gone upstairs, tied on my bonnet, and wrapped the "grey cloud" round my shoulders. I am ready to go home, and Donald is waiting to walk there with me; yet I linger in Mrs. Forsythe's room. Something tells me that never again shall I be there in the same way, never again as her son's plighted bride. I know Donald is waiting, that maybe Aunt Janet is wearying for me at home, and yet—I linger.

I stand before the picture of the boy Donald, where once I stood with my hands full of fair spring flowers, on a day that seems a lifetime back. I stand and watch the picture smiling down upon me, and as I gaze, it comes home to me that I have loved Donald as one loves the sunshine and the flowers—just because they are so bright and beautiful, we cannot choose but love them when we see them.

Donald is—but here I change the tense of my thought—Donald "was" the brightness and the beauty of my life. And now, "Farewell, Donald! Farewell, my darling, mine no more!"

Thus I say to myself as I look up at his pictured face; but, like a flood, such a passion of love and sorrow rises in my heart, that hot blinding tears blur and blot the picture from my sight; and with a sob of unutterable pain, I turn away, and drawing my veil closely over my face, hurry down the soft-carpeted stairs, and into the wide hall, where Donald stands at the door, and Mrs. Vandaleur—fresh and energetic as at the beginning of the evening—is imploring his mother not to venture from the warm drawing-room. But Mrs. Forsythe comes out to me, in spite of all these adjurations, takes both my hands in hers, and kisses my veiled face, while mine enemy looks on with her head very much on one side, and a deprecatory smile upon her countenance.

"There is no need to tell you to take care of such a precious charge!" says the soft lying voice to my Donald—mine still, for a little space; and there is a mocking devil in her eyes that drives me out into the night, more surely than a whip of scorpions.

Thus auspiciously do we set out on a walk, that is from that day forth to be to me a dear sad memory; for even now I never hear the word "farewell," but I think of Donald and myself, walking side by side through the quiet night; think of a star-gemmed sky seen through the tracery of tree-branches, where the leaves whisper softly to each other; think of the sound of our measured footsteps, and the rustle of my dress upon the ground.

My hand rests on his arm, and I have hard work to keep it from trembling, for the silence, so unusual between Donald and me, oppresses and unnerves me.

There is, too, a sense of something that must be done; something that must be said, now—to-night—before we come to the tall fir, and the white gate that I already see gleaming in the distance.

"Donald, I have a favour to ask you; will you do it for me?"

He gives a slight start, like one awaking from a dream, and answers me hurriedly, and with a painful attempt at playfulness:

"Will I do it, Mab? Why, who ever disobeys the fairy queen?"

"I fear the poor queen has no kingdom to reign over, Donald; but for once, just this once, let her be obeyed. Will you promise to come to me to-morrow, in the afternoon, and let nobody keep you away?"

My breath is coming fast and thick, my voice is full of tears, and Donald turns his face away from me as he answers, with a sort of tender pity underlying his words:

"I will come, Mab—I will not fail to come."

We have reached the white gate now, and I lay my hand upon the latch, and turn to say "Good night."

He understands that I mean to go up the avenue alone, but yet he stands beside me, and some power I cannot fight against makes me throw back my veil, and look up into his face. The moonlight falls full upon me, and perhaps he reads some story in my eyes that touches him to pity, for he says: "Are you very tired to-night, Mab?" and bends down and kisses me softly. But where is the passionate tenderness of old? Why does the touch of his lips chill me to the core of my heart?

I rest my two hands on his shoulders, and, still looking up into his face, I say: "Good night—dear!" And my voice lingers over the last word, as we linger listening to some sweet music we may never hear again!

Without a word more he leaves me, and I stand under the big dark fir, until the last echo of his footstep has died away; then I go in, pass quickly by Nannie, pause at Auntie's door to ascertain that she is asleep, and then, fairly in my own room, throw myself, all dressed as I am, upon the bed, and set myself to think. The quiet and the silence are grateful to me, the being, at last, after so long a tension of nerve and feeling, alone with myself, and free to look all things calmly in the face.

By the time I have thought it all out, a faint grey light has dawned eastward, and, as I raise my window, to breathe the cool, fresh morning air, the earliest little redbreast, up before his fellows, sings his greeting to the day that is just born. I kneel, and look out towards the ever-increasing light; the whirl of my thoughts has resolved itself into this: "It has been a mistake"—"it" stands for all the love and joy my life has ever known!—"there, far away, the new day is dawning—and life is made up of days; and this burden of life and days I must now take up alone!"

But let the day be ever so fraught with pain, ever such a crisis in the history of a life—all those little commonplace duties, that form so large a part of a woman's life, thrust themselves forward just the same. As the day wears on, I have to listen to Aunt Janet's slow details of her symptoms during the night; to answer a thousand questions as to the progress of the household management, now wholly in my care; and, hardest task of all, to hide my troubled heart from Nannie's keen and loving eyes.

Soon after I have gone through the farce of making believe to eat my solitary dinner, she makes a sudden appearance at the drawing-room door, her face full of some important news.

"There's a letter from the minister, Miss Mabel; and Mistress Malcombe's Molly has brought it over for ye to see. Mrs. Janet's glinking at it the noo, and she'll be weel content if you'll go and read it over to her as soon as may be."

I am supposed to be working at fine darning some of Aunt Janet's famous household linen; but, truth to tell, my needle makes but little progress, and I have an uncomfortable consciousness that Nannie is making a note of this fact.

"Put the work here, Miss Mabel," she says, glancing at three lines of darn, the feeble result of half-an-hour's work; "you're no well the day, I'm thinking."

I make her no reply; but go to Auntie's room, thinking, as I wend my way there, "Are things not going hardly enough with me already, that I must face this ordeal of reading aloud my master's letter?—a letter written in ignorance of all the sorrow that is gathering about me, left as I am without his guiding hand, his faithful, loving counsel?"

Now the advent of "a letter from the minister" is an event in our village. "Do ye ken that Mistress Malcombe had a letter from the minister, yester-night?" is the question, par excellence, that each neighbour asks the other; for the minister is in "foreign parts," and news from those distant regions must needs be of a very startling nature. Aunt Janet is evidently pleasantly excited by an agreeable sense of the honour shown to her, in the important missive being sent expressly for her perusal. There is a faint pink spot on either sunken cheek, and her thin hand trembles as she hands the paper to me, and bids me read it carefully, and see "all the good man says."

I do so; and I think my voice does not falter even when I come to this:

"You and I, dear wifey, will be something lonesome when the boy Donald takes our little Mab away; but she'll often come to see us, I know, and bring the same loving heart as ever, even if she grows to be a fine London lady!"

As I fold the letter and lay it down—handling it tenderly, as one would a flower that some far-away hand has sent us, and whose perfume speaks to us of tender love, and longing thoughts—Auntie looks at me smilingly, and says, as she gently pats my hand:

"It's true for them, my dearie, they'll miss you when you're Mistress Donald Forsythe; but there's 'a silver lining to the cloud,' for they too, like me, are getting into years, and will feel the comfort of knowing that there's a true heart to take care of you. Eh! dear child, how well I seem to think of you now, when first you came from heathen lands—such a wee bit wild lassie, with your bonnie hair in a tongle all over your head! Well, well—you and old Auntie have got on mighty well together!"

Words are beyond me, but I bend down and kiss her wasted hand.

"I'd be well pleased if you read to me the song of Simeon—it would be a comfortable thing to me just now, dearie;" and I reach down the well-worn old Bible from its shelf, and read the grand words of gladness and peace, to ears that will soon be closed to the voices of earthly comfort. "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace;" and in my heart I pray that this peace may "endure unto the end," and that all knowledge that might ruffle or disturb that peace, may be kept from her! There is a footstep in the avenue, a step that has been wont to make my heart beat fast, but now brings only pain, and dread, and fear. I read steadily on, Auntie repeating each word softly after me to the end; then I close the book, and in a moment—or it seems a moment to me—I am in the sitting-room, and Donald comes forward to meet me. But after one glance at my face, he stops short. I close the door, but do not offer him any greeting. I dare not risk the touch of his hand just then.

He has turned away from me, his arms are resting on the table, and his face is shaded by the hand that bears a little gold ring I gave him one day by the river-side, while now and again, with the old, familiar, well-loved gesture, he tosses back the hair from his brow.

My hands are cold, my lips seem hardly able to frame the words I need, and my voice sounds like the voice of some stranger; but the will is strong as death within me!

"Donald, I have asked you to come to-day, to tell you something that lies heavy on my heart. It must seem strange and abrupt for me to speak of this so suddenly, but I cannot soften it, or smooth it down, so you must forgive me."

He neither stirs, or speaks, and I move a step nearer to him in my earnestness and pain.

"It has been all a mistake, and we have found it out, and both have lacked courage to say so. Do you hear me, Donald? It was all a mistake. It is not like you to be cowardly; why should we not own it honestly, and part friends?"

Some little lingering ray of hope that has been in hiding far down in my heart shines out with a sudden, sweet, bright radiance—a wild longing to hear him deny the truth of my words comes over me. I make a step forward, nearer still to where the dear face is hidden in the hands that have so often clasped mine; but, at that moment, he raises his head, and as our eyes meet, a stifled sob comes from my quivering lips, for in the face that looks at me there is sorrow, shame, sadness unutterable, but no love.

His voice is hoarse and broken.

"Can you forgive me, Mab?"

And God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, knows that in that moment I forgive him, even as I hope to be forgiven.

Now that certainty has taken the place of fear, and of a half-unconscious hope, my courage comes to me fourfold. I go close up to him, and take his hands in mine.

"Donald," I say, "there is nothing to forgive; you could not help it. Oh, she is so fair, I do not wonder at it, dear! And, indeed, the pain that I am feeling now, is as nothing compared to that of living, as we have been doing lately, with a shadow for ever between us—a very lovely shadow, Donald, with golden hair, and a sweet girlish face, not worn and sad like mine. See! I am going to take my ring off your finger, and set you free!"

But he starts to his feet, and catches both my hands in a grasp like a vice.

"Mabel!" he cries, "what do you take me for? Do you think me dishonourable enough to take you at your word?"

I look steadily and sadly in his face, but say no word; and for the first time the dear eyes fall before mine, the hot blood flushes cheek and brow. Then I speak again.

"I will tell you what I take you for, Donald. I take you for a man who is far too honourable to make one woman his wife while he loves another better."

The passion that is in my heart gives me strength. I wrench my hands from his hold, and stand before him defiant.

"See!" I say, pressing my hands upon my heart to stay its beating, "I will come to you even now—I will lay my head down on your breast, as I have done so often—if you will hold out your arms to me, and look me in the face and say, in the voice that has never lied to me: 'Mabel, I love you, best and dearest of all!'"

And, as I knew it would, the truth of his nature asserts itself—he holds no loving arms out to me, speaks no loving word; and my hot, passionate words find no reply, save silence.

I look at the bowed head, the downcast face that I have known so full of boyish brightness, and such pity grows up in my heart for him, that for the time being my own sorrow fades from my sight, and I am able to be calm again.

"You must not grieve too much over this, Donald; it is hard pain, I know, but it will pass. And oh, my darling, it might have been so much, much worse! I might have found it out too late, when I could not have freed you. Thank Heaven, I know it now. Thank Heaven, I have not made your whole life desolate!"

"Desolate!" he says, catching at the word. "Ah, Mab, tell me that I have not made you so! Tell me, dear, that this is not such a very deep pain—that you will not suffer very cruelly. I could not bear to think of that poor little pale face, with such a sad, wistful look as it bears now—it will haunt me, Mab!" and he covers his eyes with his hands, as if to shut out the sight. While I—well—I feel that the interview has lasted long enough; that I cannot bear to hear him pitying a sorrow he may never, never comfort. I feel that I am listening, for the last time, to the sound of a voice that has been the music of my life; that if I listen much longer I shall break out into bitter weeping, and fall prone at his feet, and pray him not to leave me so unutterably desolate. So I rally all my failing force, and give him my hand in farewell.

"Don't be troubled about me. You would not think that I had—ever truly loved you—if I could—give you up without some pain. But do not fear, it will pass. God is very good to us when we are in trouble. He has never forsaken me yet. He will not fail me now. Good-bye, good-bye, Donald."

I speak as one who is stifling for want of air.

He has turned away, and rests his arms on the mantel-shelf, covering his face.

"Nay," I say, feebly trying to pull his hands down, "do not be unkind. Say, 'Good-bye, Mab, and God bless you.' I can say the same from my heart to you."

He turns to me with outstretched hands, and, oh! such a troubled face.

"Good-bye," he says, and says no more.

Perhaps it is something in my poor, pitiful face, looking up to his—perhaps some new and subtle revelation comes to him of how dear he is. I cannot tell; but the great tears gather and drop down.

The pain is too acute. I cannot bear it. I drag my hands from his hold.

"Leave me—oh, Donald! leave me now, if you know what pity is."

I hear the door close, the quick step down the stairs, the click of the white gate, all the old well-known sounds of his comings and his goings—sounds I had strained my ear to hear so often, and shall never hear again—and then—— Ah, my friends! then, when we are left alone with the reality of an anguish that has hitherto been but a dread, then comes the darkness which, like that in Egypt of old, may be felt.

I steal, like some weary, white-faced ghost, slowly along the wide, low passages, mechanically stretching out my hand to touch the wall, and feel something to guide me, for I am blind—deadened by a strange, awful numbness, as though all things around me, and I too, were part and parcel of some pitiful dream; that a second self, from some far distance, was watching curiously, anxious to know what that weary, tearless, haggard woman will do next. Soon I lie huddled together on my little white bed, my door closed, the world shut out, alone with my sorrow, and yet unable to grasp its height and depth, unable to look it in the face—feeling very far, oh, very far away from every one—from Donald, from love, and light, and comfort—even from God! I lie thus, cold and tearless, with a dead heart in my breast, that cannot throb, or ache, or sorrow, but seems turned into stone.

I hear a gentle tap at my door, and then Nannie's kind old face looks in, and, candle in hand, she bends anxiously over me; but I cover my face, and turn from the light, and say:

"Leave me quiet, please Nannie. I have a headache."

She walks across the room, and sets the candle down so that shade, and not glare, is thrown upon me; and then she takes one of my cold hands in both her own, and fondles it against her bosom, as she had done long ago when I was a little desolate child crying for my good ayah.

"Is it true, Miss Mabel," she says at last, "that you think to blind the poor old eyes that have watched you all these years? Are you trying to put the trouble that is in your heart from poor old Nannie? Oh, my bairn! let me help you in your sorrow! let me strive to ease the heart-ache that's in you!"

I turn away no more, and as my hand lies upon her breast, I feel her tremble and shake with some rising anger, and I see, in the dim light, her grey eyes gleam as she goes on eagerly:

"I ken her, and the wiles she's wiled him away from ye with! O my bairn, 'twas a bad day for you when first she came here wi' her wee-bit shoes, in shining buckles, and the heels that go 'chink-a-chink,' as she walks along, 'sounding brass and tinkling cymbals,' which the Lord can't no ways abide. And the mother that set her on to win the laddie from you—a false Jezebel, wi' her wheedling ways and soft words, creeping and crawling into people's houses, and sundering those the good Lord joined together! Many's the time I'd have given a year's earnings to have been let slap the door in her face! What were you, my simple dove, to strive with the wiles of such as they!" and she threw her kind loving arms about me, and kissed my cold tearless face. "Don't ye take the sorrow this way, my bairn!" she urges, imploringly, her voice broken by rising tears; "I've seen a many take the sorrow in my day; some takes it greeting, and some take it wi' a calm soul, and when there's no tears to wash away the bitterness, the heart breaks." And she croons and moans over me as a mother over her sick child.

"The Lord's aye good to us in sorrow, Miss Mabel; the dear Lord don't forget us then; it seems as if He hears us best 'out of the deep waters,' for all the noise o' the wind and waves about us."

But perhaps my still, hopeless face lying against her breast tells her that God's comfort cannot reach me yet, for she sobs out in a very passion of grief and pity:

"Oh, my lammie! How lonesome ye'll be all through the long days, without the puir bonnie lad that was just the sunshine of the house!"

"All through the long days!" Those words unlock the fountain of my tears. They set before me all the coming days in their fullest desolation—the dark days that are coming when I may watch for him no more—never listen for his step, or hear his voice, or feel the clasp of his arms again!

So the icy bands that hold my heart melt away, and, clinging about Nannie's neck, I break into bitter weeping.

OLD Q.

Facing the Green Park, and only a few doors from Park-lane, is to be seen a remarkable porch, consisting of two tall pillars, without the usual steps, perched upon what looks like a small coach-house, or the entrance to a wine vault. This mansion belongs to a well-known nobleman, and the arrangement was made about seventy years ago, to suit the infirmities of a disreputable old patrician, who, seated in his chair, was let down by machinery from the high level of his parlour to the street. It was, in fact, "old Q." himself, whom some London old gentlemen may still recollect.

"Old Q." was the last Duke of Queensberry, and, it may be added, the last of the frightful old roués, whose aim seemed to be to scandalise both heaven and earth by their excesses—the coterie that enjoyed "Hellfire Clubs" and Medmenham Abbeys, that "had to go to Paris" to get a waistcoat fit to put on, and who brought back a couple of dozen copies of Crébillon's newest romance for sale among friends. He was of the set that included Wilkes, Sandwich, Hall Stevenson, Gilly Williams, Hanger, Barrymore, and a host of others.

It is recorded that even when a school-boy (he was born in 1725) he was "distinguished by his escapades in the capital," such was the pleasant newspaper phrase. Lord March, the title "old Q." then bore, soon became conspicuous in the town. He was a spirited, clever young man, with an extraordinary store of vivacity; and certainly it must be said that in writing a letter the roués of his time excelled. The letters of the fast young men of our day are conspicuous for a halting, feeble style, and the roundabout "flabbiness" that is found in such documents contrasts unfavourably with the good English, straightforwardness, liveliness, and even wit, of the epistles of Lord March, Williams, Storer, and Lord Carlisle. Such, however, does not compensate for the scandal these gentry occasioned, but which were thus extenuated by the prints of the day. "The situation of a young nobleman, when he first starts in life, may be said to be peculiarly painful, for being brought up to no useful or honourable profession, occupations of a more gay and volatile nature frequently engross his attention." Of such a kind were these fantastic wagers, which made us doubt whether the wagerers were so much "volatile" as weak in their heads. One of these made quite a reputation for his lordship, on account of the energy and anxiety he brought to bear on the result. He made a bet with an Irish gentleman that he would drive a carriage nineteen miles in an hour. The Irish gentleman, we are told, "was usually known by the appellation of Count O'Taafe," in which, considering that he had no other name, there was nothing unusual. The wager arose out of a discussion at a sporting meeting; and the question was thrown out as a sort of speculation by his lordship. As, however, he was considered one of the most knowing persons on the turf, and placed no reliance whatever upon jockeys, but trusted all to himself, it is probable that this was in the nature of what is called "a put-up thing." Preparations were accordingly made. Mr. Wright, "that ingenious coach-maker" of Long-acre, was employed to construct a vehicle of extraordinary lightness; this he secured by making it of wood and whalebone. The harness was formed of silk, instead of leather. The noble bettor practised for long before, four blood horses being driven at this terrific speed; and during the process no fewer than seven horses fell victims to the severity of the training. During the practice, however, his lordship had the satisfaction of discovering that the feat was to be done.

On the 29th of August, 1750, the "event" came off, and having secured what was considered difficult enough in those days—two grooms who would not play booty, this curious match against time was run and won. In the window of that curious old print-shop, which is close to "Evans's," in Covent-garden, was lately hanging a contemporary print, representing the performance of the match. The carriage is there shown as a sort of "spider" arrangement, consisting of little more than a pole and the wheels. These last would have made an American manufacturer smile. Another memorable achievement was his match, in 1756, with a Scotch nobleman, when his lordship, "properly accoutred" in his velvet cap, red silken jacket, buckskin breeches, and long spurs, not only backed his horse, but actually, to the apparent astonishment of the reporters, rode him.

Another of his wagers, which led to a suit at law, is often quoted in the courts. He had made a bet of five hundred guineas with a gentleman, as to whether a Mr. Pigot or Sir W. Codrington would die first. One of the lives having expired on the very morning of the wager, a nice point arose, which came before the courts, and was regularly tried. His opponent was a Mr. Pigot, probably the son or nephew of the subject of the wager; for these were the days when gentlemen of "ton" were "really obliged to cut their own fathers." Counsel for one side urged that, if it were the case of two horses, the death of one of the animals, before the event, vitiated the transaction. But the court and jury decided for Lord March.

His lordship was conspicuous for the number and success of his attachments, or, as the newspaper of his day stated it, "was not insensible, if we are to credit report, to female charms." The objects of his devotion were usually selected from the opera, and "the Zamperini" and "the Rena" contended for his patronage. A more selfish, stingy, uninteresting fellow never existed than this "old Q." As he grew old and older, he grew more and more selfish, economised his pleasures warily, and became self-denying, so as to have more enjoyment, and not draw too extensively on his store of health and satisfaction, and thus succeeded in reaching a fine span of life.

The drollest thing in the world is that this proper nobleman should have kept a chaplain, who ventured to attack Mr. Wilkes for his irregularities; but, as might be expected, drew on himself a rough but very natural retort: "Many of the darts shot at the black gown of the priest glanced against the ermined robes of his noble patron."

After this episode, "old Q." comes on the scene again. His pleasures beginning somewhat to pall on him, when near seventy, he "ratted" on the first regency question, deserting his old master as though he wished to secure the favour of the young prince. On the sudden recovery of the king, he was dismissed from his office with ignominy, to the amusement and satisfaction of the court. There was, with all his faults, a thorough genuineness about this disreputable nobleman. He was perfectly candid. An old Lord Essex used to tell a story of his coming home betimes from a ball with the duke—both arrayed in their stars and decorations—and of some rustics bursting into a sort of horse-laugh at the sight. The duke said, simply, to his friend, at the same time tapping his stars, "What! have they found out this humbug at last?" He had magnificent seats in the country, which he never cared to visit, and a pretty villa at Richmond, to which the pious Mr. Wilberforce was once invited, and where he heard his host exclaim with an admirable candour—"I can't see what they admire in this river. There it goes, flow, flow, all day long." This Richmond house was fitted up "in a style of superb elegance." He was willing to occupy it, and occasionally give the favour of his countenance and patronage to the place; but his connection with it was severed, owing to a reason which is thus gravely unfolded. He lived there "till the folly of the inhabitants, by making a vexatious claim to a few yards of ground, which, unconscious of any fraudulent right, he had taken into his enclosure," he determined to quit a place where he considered himself grossly insulted. These are literally the terms in which the papers speak of this cool proceeding of the man who had taken ground that did not belong to him, and of whom the inhabitants were, no doubt, glad to be rid. The predominant feature of his character was "to do what he liked without caring who was pleased or displeased with it"—a simple and agreeable rule of life.

As years passed on, and the sight of one eye gone, there was left to him the pastime of sitting in a cane chair, in his balcony, a parasol held over his head, in his bow-window at Piccadilly, "an emaciated libel on manhood," says one, who had seen him there, ogling the ladies of all degrees who passed by, and a groom ready mounted, "Jack Radford" by name, waiting below to ride after such friend or acquaintance as the duke recognised. In the afternoon, he was to be seen tottering down the little iron staircase to his vis-à-vis—a dark green vehicle, with long-tailed, black horses. During winter he carried a muff; two servants sat in the rumble; while the indispensable Jack Radford rode behind. A buck of fifty years ago recalled him as "a little sharp-looking man, very irritable, who swore like ten thousand troopers." There was indeed a suggestion of Voltaire's face. Still, we are told that, "viewed from behind," he appeared surprisingly youthful—a rather ambiguous compliment.

There was a strange mystery connected with the arts employed by the old sybarite to detain life within that shrivelled case. A physician enjoyed an annuity of five hundred a year for the duke's life, with the understanding that nothing was to be expected after death. A truly artful arrangement. But he did not rest on the arts of legitimate pharmacy. A French quack, named Père Elisée, was in his grace's service, whose duty it was to compound strange drugs, supposed to have an elixir-like virtue, and to supply the vital power that was departing. At one time a rumour was rife in London that the aged duke was in the habit of taking milk baths!

Thus the old fellow wagged on, now becoming deaf of one ear, now blind of an eye, now supplying its place with a glass one: a perfect ruin, but still preserving what were called his "elegant manners." At last, when eighty-five years old, and in the year 1810, this selfish and uninteresting specimen of an old epicurean was to be called away from his three superb "places," his hoarded wealth, and his pleasures, having, as his friend Sir Nathaniel declared, determined to enjoy the remnant of his life, "being as ardent for pleasure at eighty as he was at twenty:" in which laudable frame of mind death overtook him.

His testament was found to be a curious document, consisting of a will formally executed, and no fewer than twenty-five codicils, more irregularly drawn. His ready money was found to amount to nearly a million sterling, and the disposition of it caused a universal flutter. Lord and Lady Yarmouth inherited all the estates by his will—a disposition revoked in the codicils, and reduced to two hundred and fifty thousand pounds in cash. Lord Yarmouth, a friend of the Prince of Wales, was known to his friends, from the peculiar tint of his whiskers, as "Red Herrings;" while his wife was the well-known heroine of George Selwyn's insane devotion.

This would open up one of the most curious histories. Uninteresting himself, "old Q." had become associated with a curious and interesting little episode, which formed at one time amusement and speculation for the fashionable London coteries. An Italian marchioness, of good family and connections, Madame Fagniani, had come to London about the year 1770, and had gone out in society. Among her friends and admirers were Lord March and Mr. George Selwyn. The whole is one of the absurd chapters in the history of human folly; but her little girl became, first, heiress to Mr. Selwyn, and then, as Lady Yarmouth, became legatee of "old Q."

A vast number of his friends were left either ten thousand or five hundred a year. Three French ladies received a thousand pounds apiece, with which they were, no doubt, but ill-contented. Some of the other legacies were marked by a strange oddity: a Mrs. Brown was allotted an annuity of only five guineas a year; while Jack Radford, his well-known groom, received an annuity of two hundred pounds, together with all his horses and carriages. His steward, confectioner, and other important attendants, had each the same; the female servants were nearly all passed over. The wretched French compounder of mysterious drugs had five thousand pounds. The legacy duty on the whole was calculated at about one hundred and twenty thousand pounds. But, strange to say, this old epicurean, who had been so profuse in his dispositions, passed over the apothecary who attended him until he was himself brought to the verge of the grave. He had attended him for seven weary years, had paid nine thousand three hundred and forty visits, besides sitting up some seventeen hundred nights! Here was an amazing apothecary's bill; and such attendance on a millionaire merited reward. He claimed ten thousand pounds. The Yarmouths were just enough to admit it, and came forward at the trial to support him: and though the judge declared that an apothecary had no right to recover fees, the jury found for him to the amount of nearly eight thousand pounds. Unfortunately, all these splendid legacies belonged to the twenty-five codicils, written on sheets of note paper and improperly prepared. This was to the advantage of the Yarmouths, who, indeed, would lose a legacy in specie, but received a vast estate. The only resource was Chancery, and for six years the Jack Radfords and other humble annuitants were tortured with suspense, until, at last, the Yarmouths consented, on some certain shape of indemnity, that the legacies should be paid.

He was interred, rather inappropriately, under the communion-table of St. James's church. He was attended to the grave by his male servants only; the unremembered female servants, probably, not caring to attend. The heiress who had been George Selwyn's pet and had sat on his knee, now more than a hundred years ago, lived until the year 1859, dying when nearly ninety years old.

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK III. CHAPTER I. NOTES FROM MEMORY. WIDOW AND MOTHER.

THE scene is not much altered since we beheld it last. The season is cooler, answering in point of time to the full spring tide on the other side of the world, to which side belongs England; and the tints are more sombre. The skies are, however, of a grander height and a deeper blue than our skies, and they were hung last night with jewels such as do not glitter in our hemisphere, however glorious may be our glimpses of the

Star-gemmed floor of the land we love.

The house is very quiet, all the blinds are down, and none of the former signs of life and occupation have any place upon the wide verandah. The flower-stands, without flowers in them, are symmetrically ranged against the wall; the mats are removed, and a fatal neat precision deprives the place of its old familiar aspect.

The afternoon was advancing, and the profound stillness of the house had been unbroken for hours, when a hand put aside the curtain of one of the doorways, and a woman came, with a noiseless step, to the door of the room into which a man had been carried a few months previously, whose coming thither had had such terrible significance for the household at Mount Kiera Lodge.

The woman paused at the door, bent towards the lock, and shook her head disapprovingly. At a simple object, apparently. It was only the feathered end of a pen, pushed through the keyhole, and protruding a couple of inches on the outside.

"Not to be disturbed, eh?" she muttered. "I wonder how many hours a day that blessed feather tells everybody in the house that the mistress of it is to be allowed to break her heart in silence and solitude in there? Too much of this, my dear lady, too much of this; there are others will have to pay for it by-and-by, as well as yourself."

Then, with an expressive uplifting of her hands, the woman advanced to the hall-door, opened it, and stepping softly into the porch, looked out.

"That girl has been out for hours and hours; and I don't believe she ever tells her, or the other ever asks, where she goes or what she does. There is something very wrong between them, and there's more changed here than the loss of that good man accounts for, since the last time I was here. Not a sign of her!"

The comely woman then re-entered the house, and after a momentary pause at the door, from whose keyhole the feather still protruded, she left the hall again to its former solitude.

Let us disregard the feather signal, which tells the household that Mrs. Pemberton's solitude is not to be invaded, and enter the room in which she is. It is the room which used to be known as John Pemberton's "study," before John Pemberton's place in the home which he had made became vacant, and knew him no more. The book-cases, all their contents arranged with a regularity which denotes disuse, are locked, the portfolios of engravings, and the rolls of maps, stand blankly back beside the walls; and linen covers shroud all the tasteful objects, mostly of his wife's selection, which crowded the tables and the mantelpiece when John Pemberton loved to look at them. Perfectly clean, neat, and cared for, is the study, as in former days—the days which seem to the survivors of the dead so impossible, so incredible; but a room in which life is lived habitually no more.

Mary Pemberton sits before a leather-covered writing-table, with drawers on either side; a despatch-box stands open before her, and on the left of her blotting-book lie several sheets of letter-paper, covered with writing in her own hand. It is not consecutive or connected writing, but looks like memoranda jotted down in brief paragraphs upon each page; and her present employment is the concoction of a narrative or statement from these materials. She has suspended that employment, and sits with her elbows on the table, her hands clasped under her chin, and her dark brown eyes, with all their brightness quenched, and their sweet expression changed to that of vague and wistful longing, fixed seemingly upon the scene outside the windows, the fair green sward and the lofty trees, but in reality seeing none of these things—seeing only the spectres of her memory. The interlaced fingers on which the chin rests are white and thin, and their clasp of each other is feeble. Mary Pemberton's rich brown hair is laid smoothly on her forehead, under the white cap which marks her estate of widowhood, and most, perhaps, of all these changes, renders her unlike her former self. She is dethroned, and sitting amid the ruins of her woman's kingdom; and the lack of that plaited diadem, which of old shone gloriously above her smooth feminine brow, is the sign and proof of her discrownment. Equally unlike her former attire is Mary Pemberton's dress, a very long and full peignoir of black silk, heavily trimmed with crape, and loosely confined at the waist by a broad crape sash. This easy robe conceals her figure, as she sits, but when she presently rises from her chair, and slowly paces the room from end to end, in painful thought, it is plain that her figure is altered too. And her step! Where is its lightness? Where is the tread which used to fall like music on her husband's ear, the tread which needed not that he should say to her, with the Irish lover in the song:

Step light, for my heart it lies under your foot, love!

There are no tears in her eyes, but they look as though they were tired of weeping, while yet there is an ocean of unshed tears behind them. She is wrapped in deep and painful reflection, and she rises and walks about that she may think her thoughts out more clearly; and as she walks she twists her wedding-ring upon her wasted finger, as though it were a link with the dead counsellor who of old never failed her, but to whom she can never more turn for advice or succour.

"It is the best way," she says to herself. "A strange story to have to tell to a stranger; but there are no others in the world now, but strangers, to me. No others—oh John, John—not one other now!—and how much I need a friend." Then came a pause in her murmured self-communing, and the tired eyes found new tears to shed, the weary heart was lifted and shaken by fresh sobs.

"There is no other way," she resumed, "the coming time may be 'the end all here' for me, and all I have to leave be left still more helpless and alone than I am. The only communication which ever reached him from this Mr. Dwarris was a kind, gentlemanlike, cordial letter; and he told him enough of his circumstances and its plans to make it evident to me that he would not have hesitated to tell Mr. Dwarris anything in which aid might be needed. I cannot do better. I will write it to the end as though for myself, setting down exactly what happened, and what I think and fear; and so I will send it to Mr. Dwarris; and if the need for his reading it should arise, he will act, in the interests confided to him, with discretion and firmness."

She moved with a weary, heavy step to the table, and taking up the sheet of paper which lay before her on the blotting-book, she read the lines already traced upon it.

They were as follows:

"It was on the sixth day of my husband's illness, and one week exactly after Edward Randall's funeral, that Dr. Gray spoke to me in a tone of alarm about him. Dr. Gray said: 'My reason for telling you that there is danger to-day, rather than a little later—my reason for not sparing you, at all events, for a few hours, is that you may take advantage of this period during which your husband's mind is quite clear—I am bound to tell you it is not likely to last—to ascertain his wishes. May I ask whether, to your knowledge, his affairs are all settled?'

"I told him what my husband had told me, when he was making arrangements about our going to England, that he had made his will, and intended to forward it, with a letter of instructions, to his brother-in-law, Mr. Dwarris, at Wrottesley; and that I believed this had been done.

"On hearing this, Dr. Gray said, 'You have no reason to believe that he would have desired to make any alteration in his dispositions or arrangements in any way; you think all ought to remain as he has settled it; that, if—if this illness should terminate fatally' (he spoke very feelingly, though quite to the point), 'his not living to return to England would not influence the order to be taken with his property, supposing him to be quite aware that he was not likely to live to return to England?'

"Before I could answer this question, I had to force my memory to act with precision; and this was hard to do, under the shock of Dr. Gray's communication, but the solemnity and urgency of his manner forced me into calmness. What I found in my memory on the subject was the following:

"On that awful day, which looked so bright and happy, and was the very last which could ever have any light for me in its hours—when we were talking together in my room, and I afterwards related to him the story of my life, before he came into it to turn it into peace and blessing—my husband told me he had made his will. I distinctly requested him to tell me none of its provisions; he rallied me a little upon my superstitious prejudice. He said: 'Very well, then; I will only tell you this one thing. I have named my brother-in-law as co-guardian of Ida with yourself; I have written to inform him that I have done so; and I have requested Meredith to forward the document to him in advance of our arrival in England.' I asked him why? He replied: 'Because my mind will be quite easy about you and Ida, when I know that he is in possession of my wishes and intentions respecting you.' After a few other sentences—never to be forgotten, in their baseless trust and deceived hope, but not to be recorded here—had been spoken between us, I asked him one more question. I said: 'Supposing we were both gone, what provision have you made in that case for Ida's future?' He answered: 'In that case, Ida's uncle would be her sole guardian.'

"I repeated these questions and answers, exactly as I have set them down here, to Dr. Gray, and he looked grave when he heard them.

"'This leaves you in entire ignorance of the actual position in which you would find yourself here,' he said, 'should Pemberton's illness terminate fatally; and it seems to me it would bind you, under any circumstances, to go to England. Would such be your own wish?'

"'I should have no wishes, if he had left me. In any case, I could only think of carrying out his.'

"'This brings me to my point, my dear Mrs. Pemberton,' he said. 'Ascertain his wishes. You cannot possibly harm him,' he continued, anticipating the question on my lips. 'And you may bring to him a secret, unspeakable relief. At all events, we know he is a man of strong mind and purpose, and I am much mistaken if he is one to fear death.'

"I knew that he did not, and that his fearlessness came from the Divine source, and was, therefore, well-assured courage; not the vain bravado or the stultified pride of the unbeliever; and my dread did not arise from him, but had its origin in my own weakness.

"'I have no more to say,' continued Dr. Gray. 'Ask him, in the fewest and plainest words you can find, whether, in the event of your being left alone, he would wish you to go to England, and whether he would desire to make any material alteration in his will.'

"'If he should say that he does wish to do so, what am I to do then?'

"Dr. Gray walked to the window, leaned his arm upon the sash, and looked out. His attitude was one in which John was accustomed to stand, during our morning talks in that very room, day after day; and this seemingly slight circumstance overthrew the composure which I had hitherto maintained at an immense cost of intense agony.

"'Don't, don't, for God's sake!' I cried, stretching my hands towards him. He turned sharply, not knowing what I meant, for we had not spoken; and I saw him approach me through a cloud. There came a rushing in my ears—a quick, hot, sickening surging of my blood through all my frame. All those sensations were simultaneous and instantaneous; and then there was an interval of rest, of which I was half-conscious; and when it passed, I was lying on the floor, with a cushion under my head, my dress was loosened, and my hand was in Dr. Gray's. I tried to explain to Dr. Gray what it was that had caused me to feel the swift and painful agitation that had turned me so faint. He looked at me strangely while I was speaking, and there was something in his face which conveyed to me, impossible as it seemed, that he did not quite believe what I told him.

"'It seems very foolish to you, no doubt,' I said, 'and it would have seemed very foolish to me a little while ago; but everything is changed by what you have told me, and I am changed too.'

"'Of course, of course,' he assented quietly. 'But, my dear lady, you bore what I was obliged to tell you—the cause for alarm in Mr. Pemberton's state—with great courage, and you faint because I arouse an association which may possibly be painful in the future! Are you sure there is no other cause for this? You have never consulted me on any point connected with your health, and I conclude it has always been good.'

"I answered him rather impatiently. After what he had told me, and with the prospect before me of what I had to do, according to his advice, he was wasting time in talking about me, just because my strength had failed a little under the stroke he had dealt it. I sat up, rearranged my dress, and said:

"'My health is very good indeed. I have never needed medical advice. Pray excuse my foolish weakness, dear Dr. Gray, and let us go back to what we were saying. I must not be long away from John.' Oh, the terrible difficulty with which I uttered the dear familiar name. Who that has lived through the hours which succeed the knowledge of 'the truth,' has not experienced that dreadful pang?

"'Tell me, if I find that he does wish to make a change in his will, what am I to do then?'

"'Then,' he answered, still looking at me with the peculiar intentness of the physician's gaze, 'you must send at once for Mr. Meredith, and let him see him. If no change is to be made, it will cost him a very slight effort to tell you so. And now, Mrs. Pemberton, before you return to him, may I ask you something about yourself?'

"'Certainly, you may ask me anything.'

"'Have you any wish or anxiety on the subject of his will? Are you satisfied with an arrangement which, as you describe it, seems to imply that his eldest daughter has been chiefly considered?'

"'Of course I am perfectly satisfied. I have no wish or anxiety of any kind. Nothing can ever be worth either, if the fear with which you have inspired me should come true. I don't know the details, but no doubt Ida is chiefly considered, as she ought to be.'

"'Are you quite sure of that?'

"I looked at him with great surprise. His mood was incomprehensible to me, and time was passing away. He muttered something—it sounded like 'it seems incredible, but it must be so'—and then he took a seat by my side.

"'My dear lady,' he said, 'you are not urgently required in the sick-room at present, and unless I am very much mistaken indeed, I have to tell you something of the utmost importance to you to know, and which renders your communication to your husband doubly necessary, indeed imperative. I fear, I greatly fear, that a terrible trial awaits you, but I believe you have to look for a consolation as great as anything in this world can afford you.'

"I could only look at him, breathing quickly, and trembling.

"And then he told me—explaining the innumerable vague feelings, physical and mental, which had beset me for many weeks, but had passed almost unheeded, first amid the pleasant interest and excitement, and then amid the disaster and dismay of the recent time—what was the nature of the consolation, far off indeed, but sure and certain, that was coming to me.

"John was quiet when I re-entered his room, and his face was wan and sunken; but his mind was quite clear, and a little of the light of the old smile was in the look he turned on me, as I took the place beside him which the nurse in attendance upon him vacated at my approach.

"The nurse was a most efficient and respectable person, named Simcox, who had been recommended to us by Dr. Gray, when Edward Randall was brought into our house.

"His hand moved restlessly upon the coverlet, and I closed mine gently over it.

"'I am very ill, Mary,' he said, slowly, 'very, very ill.'

"I answered that he was very ill; and then, in words which I cannot write down, what had to be said was spoken between him and me. Very soon he began to speak of the plans and the hopes that had been, and how they might still be real, but might be things of the past; and he approached the subject which I had been so strongly enjoined to introduce.

"'I am thankful to know, dearest,' he said, 'that you and Ida are secured against the future. Meredith has forwarded my will to Dwarris.'

"I said, steadily—how could I, oh, how could I?—

"'Would you still wish us to go to England, if—if——'

"'If I am not to go with you? Yes, love, distinctly. I wish you to have help with the charge of Ida.'

"'John, I asked you, once, not to tell me the provisions of your will. Now, I want you to tell them to me. You have left all you possess to Ida, have you not?'

"'No. I have made proper provision for you, independent of her; and I have given you and Dwarris a great deal of power in respect to her. And I have done the only thing you ever asked me to do, my dearest—I have so settled your portion that it will revert to Ida, or her children, when—when you come to me.'

"I slid from my chair, and kneeled by his bedside; I laid my arm around his feeble head, and said to him, with my lips close to his:

"'I want you to alter that condition, John. I want you to let me have that money to do as I like with it, because there is another right beside mine to be considered.'

"I cannot set down here—I could not, if it were even for my own reminding only—the words which we said to each other; the words in which he and I spoke of the hope that might have been, of the child whom he might never see, but in whom he should live again for me, if, indeed, he were going from me now. In their supreme sorrow, in their awful, unearthly joy and tenderness, in their sacred solemnity, those words rest in the silence of my heart, until, it may be, he and I shall whisper them to each other in eternity, where the story of our lives shall have been told, and its meaning made plain.

"He was exceedingly exhausted when Dr. Gray returned, late in the evening, and I saw at once that, with his first glance at his patient, the physician's fears were confirmed.

"In the early morning Mrs. Simcox called me, and I found Dr. Gray in the corridor outside my door. He looked exceedingly grave, and he held a paper in his hand.

"'He is worse!' I exclaimed.

"'He is much worse. My dear lady, you will need all your courage.'

"'No; you must not go to him for a few minutes yet.' He spoke rapidly. 'After you left him, Mr. Pemberton was perfectly conscious, and he spoke to me, of his own accord, of the change which it would be necessary to make in his will. I told him I had sent for Meredith; but he grew extremely uneasy and distressed at the delay, so much so, that I proposed, as his wishes might be expressed in a very simple form of words, that I should draw up a short will; that he should sign it in the presence of Mrs. Simcox and Reynolds'—Reynolds is Dr. Gray's servant—'and thus set his mind at rest on the subject. I told him I considered it of the utmost importance that there should be no disturbance of his mind; and that, when Meredith came, everything could be done over again if he wished. He assented at once. I wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper from his dictation; he signed the document, Mrs. Simcox and Reynolds affixed their signatures, and all was done.'

"'Here is the will,' he continued; 'you had better put it in a place of safety. Do so at once, while I wait for you here.'

"I took the paper from him, and re-entered my room. On a chest of drawers, just inside the door, and fully visible from where Dr. Gray stood, was placed my jewel-case: I unlocked it, laid the paper on the top of the first tray, without glancing at it, and instantly rejoined Dr. Gray.

"'Now I may go to him,' I said.

"'Yes, you may go to him; but it is my duty to prepare you for a change. I do not think he will know you.'

"He did know me, however, though he could no longer speak to me. Mr. Meredith arrived during the day, but there was no need for his services. That John knew me long after he seemed to be unconscious of all around him, I know, in a way that I could not analyse, but he spoke to me audibly no more.

* * * * *

"The friends who acted for me in all that had to be done afterwards were Mr. Meredith and Dr. Gray. Mr. Meredith asked for the paper which Dr. Gray had handed to me, and I gave it to him. I had not, in the meantime, acquired any knowledge of its contents; but Mr. Meredith informed me that the document was perfectly in form, and that there would be no trouble in carrying out its behests.

"'They are of the simplest nature,' he added. 'Mr. Pemberton revokes his former will, and leaves to you only, without reserve, and at your absolute disposition, all his property of every kind soever.'

"'And Ida?' I exclaimed. The entire confidence of my husband in me almost frightened me at the first moment. The unutterable sweetness of it came to me afterwards.

"'There is no mention of her in this paper,' said Mr. Meredith, 'and it was unnecessary. I know the terms of the will which is revoked by this, and they express an unqualified reliance on your discretion, care, and affection towards her. They constitute you joint guardian of Miss Pemberton with Mr. Dwarris, but this provision does not hold good, as it is not specified in the present, which gives no directions about the retention of any portion of the former will.'

"'Do you mean,' I asked, 'that the entire disposition of my husband's property is in my hands, and that no one has any share of authority, or right, with me?'

"'That is my precise meaning, Mrs. Pemberton. You can do as you please with it all, both now and in the future.'

"'Then I presume I have the power to make a will, by which Mr. Dwarris would be placed by me in the position he would have held under Mr. Pemberton's first will?'

"'Certainly you have.'

"Mr. Meredith and I then proceeded to discuss the arrangements about Mount Kiera Lodge. Under my sad circumstances the people to whom the place had been sold, and who were to have taken possession in a few weeks, consented to waive their claim, and to permit me to retain the occupancy of the house until after the birth of my child."

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PHŒBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER V. CONFIDENCES.

PHŒBE was at first inclined to attempt a coup de théâtre, and startle the pair by her sudden appearance, to the sound of a peal of laughter; but she felt the experiment would be dangerous. Instead, she quietly stole back, wondering, certainly, but rather wounded. She would have trusted all to the loyalty of her friend, and was much piqued at not being trusted with an adventure in which she would have been enchanted to co-operate. Before she went to bed that night, she was in her friend's room. She disdained—as some would have inclined to do—to invite the other into a trap by getting her to make excuses, or ambiguously account for her time during the evening, but at once began to reproach her.

"I thought you always told me everything," she said; "every secret, as I told you mine?"

Adelaide turned on her with a savage vivacity that almost scared Phœbe.

"So you have been spying on me? I insist on knowing what you know. If you have——"

The tender colour came into Phœbe's cheek. Her lips curled as by instinct.

"I have never spied on anyone—not in the way you mean. You should know me better than to say so. But—why should I not tell you the truth?—I did see you talking to a man at the garden-gate."

A look of anger and mortification came into Adelaide's face. Her haughty spirit seemed to be wrung at this discovery. Perhaps she was humiliated at being thus detected, or at the advantage over her given to one who was so inferior.

"Surely you are not angry with me. How could I help being in the garden at that time? Why, I might just as well be angry with you for not trusting me!"

The other was looking at her steadily, as if trying to read in her eyes whether this statement was true. Gradually the look of distrust passed away. She was making up her mind to a resolution.

"Sometimes there are secrets too dangerous to be told. But now that you have my secret," continued Adelaide, "you know what I wished you not to know. But, mind, you were fairly warned."

This serious phrase, and, indeed, all serious phrases connected with responsibility, made Phœbe look grave, if not alarmed.

"Warned!" she repeated. "Why, what is there to be afraid of?"

"I mean you will have to be cautious; this is not a bit of fun, as you might think. That is what I want you to understand."

"But you could not think that I would betray you?" asked Phœbe gravely. "You know me too well for that."

In a matter-of-fact way the other insisted: "I want to put it beyond misunderstanding, once for all. I did not intend that you, or anyone in the school, should know of this; I do not wish that any one should be burdened with the responsibility of my secrets. It was your own act, recollect; and all I want to be understood now, once for all, is, that there must be no trifling with the matter. It is sport to you, but it may be death to me. There, we will leave the subject now."

This seemed rather hard and harsh to Phœbe, and for some time afterwards she felt a little wounded. She was puzzled, too, by the rather legal and official fashion in which the matter was defined. However, as nearly always occurred in such difficulties, she seized with welcome upon any solution that would bring back the old cheerful view of things. It occurred to her also that there must be much mortification for Adelaide, in being thus detected in the entanglement of the soft passion. Phœbe even felt full of pity and indulgence for her friend.

Adelaide, after an interval, felt that she had been almost too stern with this tender nature, and had compromised her unbending nature, by putting her caution in too harsh a shape. But, all the same, she was heartily mortified at a partnership which accident had thus forced upon her. She had, among her other plans, decreed that she should carry out her scheme alone and unassisted. If it succeeded, "well and good," it should come as a coup de théâtre upon them all—on the Misses Cooke, on the girls—who, at her departure, should cherish the tradition of her, as one who was able, by her strong mind and will, to control events. If it failed, it was ill and bad, and it jarred on her pride to think how she should have put herself in the power even of that trusting and admiring soul. Even though she herself were removed far away, and should not know how the news should be received, the notion of that levelling rankled in her heart. It will be thus seen that Adelaide's feelings towards Phœbe were of a curiously mixed kind, made up of some liking, some suspicion, and a dislike, if not a jealousy, of superiority. She was quick to detect that superiority of impulse, which was reckless of all calculations of self-interest, and would prompt to generous and unselfish actions that she could not dream of.

It was hard, however, to resist the good spirits and importunity of Phœbe, who, now, in possession of this tremendous secret, was tormented by a feverish desire to know all details. Her free inquiries were not to be restrained even by the cold reserve of her friend. She put questions of the most eager and impulsive kind, which were not to be put aside. Was he handsome? Oh, she was sure he was! Rich? had he a fine place in the country—a nice name?

That last touch of the "nice name" restored to Adelaide her sense of superiority. She became a little communicative.

"He is neither rich, nor beautiful, nor has he a nice name," she said. "I am no judge of such matters, as you know, especially of the last two. But he is a gentleman, and well connected; I want no more; for the tyranny here, the thought of being turned into a schoolmistress, becomes more and more odious to me every day."

"And how was it all managed? It seems wonderful, shut up here, and with Miss Cooke watching!" And Phœbe looked with genuine admiration at her friend, for she was thinking at that moment if any gallant and peerless gentleman had offered to whom she could give her heart, how in the wide world she could have contrived what the clever Adelaide had done.

"He has been about it a long time," went on Adelaide, "but I took no notice, until, as I say, this loathing began rising, rising every day like a tide. These Cooke women have lately wished to treat me as their property, in which they have invested so much, and as the time draws near for payment have grown arrogant. Then I began to think of him."

"But how?" repeated Phœbe, still intent on the mechanism of the adventure.

"Oh, that was easy," said the other; "that creature, Canova, would do anything for money or gentility. He carried the letters for me."

"How simple," thought Phœbe, "when once we come to know a thing." Still would she have thought of Canova?

"But how did it all come about?" she asked eagerly. "You didn't tell me that."

"You recollect the day I went with Emma Cooke, when she had to go and see the dentist? He was in the same carriage, opposite to me. It was only the week before that they had insulted me—these two women, I mean—and I had made up my mind for good and all to be a dependent no longer. This was the first chance that offered, and I did not let it pass, I promise you. We were not half an hour in the train, and before he left it, I had made my impression. When I set my mind on a thing, it somehow surely comes about, as you know, Phœbe."

"It is indeed most wonderful," said Phœbe, suddenly grave. "I assure you, it has often seemed to me like some kind of magic power."

"Nothing of the kind," said the other. "It is simply resolution, which always finds ways and means. The thing was done when he left us. I said he should like me, and, what is more, he shall marry me, too, though he may not intend it now."

Phœbe started. In all this there appeared to be something brutal, something that trampled through the gossamer network of romance that hung about her. The distinction as to loving, with the possibility of not marrying, was bewildering.

"Why if he will marry you? Is it not what he would wish, when he loves you?"

"Of course," said Adelaide, carelessly, "but still I shall make it a certainty. I daresay he thinks he can amuse himself with a poor girl like me, who has no one to protect her. 'I love and I ride away,' like the shabby fellow in the song. It would be a disagreeable surprise to find himself held by the bridle."

Phœbe laughed at this picture, and then became grave.

"If he were that kind of character," she said, "he would not be the man to love. I would scorn, hate, and detest him. I wish I could see him, I would tell him what you are—what a noble, generous nature yours is, and how you have been treated here."

Adelaide looked at her sharply.

"You would wish to see him? There is no need of that—for the present, at least. Perhaps I am too boastful, and it may not come to anything. Now I must go back to their Dacierian humbug, as I call it. For I mean to spring a mine on them there too. They don't intend to let me get it, I can see; they want it for that aristocrat, Clinton, to be given in presence of the mamma and papa, and increase the connection."

Miss Cross was unusually bitter this morning; but there was truth in her speculation. The Misses Cooke did not desire that so high an honour should be thrown away on the mere cheap drudges of the school. They were eager that the other candidate, the Honourable Millicent Clinton, who had some cleverness, should, in presence of a congenially fashionable assemblage, as just pictured, receive it from the hands of the amiable Dr. Drinkwater, and thus "increase the connection."

Though Ada had been thus confidential, Phœbe noticed that she grew reserved on the grand subject, as though she felt she had been too communicative. Gradually Phœbe began to think that the affair had "gone off," or that the lover had withdrawn, and was thereupon too delicate to think of paining her friend by questions. It was, however, a great disappointment to her, as she would have "given worlds" to be allowed to discuss this delicious subject in all its bearings and details. Adelaide said that he had gone away, that he would not be back for some weeks, and then that she hardly knew what turn the matter would take. Phœbe was certain "in her own mind"—a locality in which she was fond of laying the scene of a great many little operations—that there had been a quarrel, and was deeply grieved.

CHAPTER VI. THE MATRON.

An important functionary in the establishment was a dry, sour lady, who filled the office of housekeeper, giving out linen, &c., but who acted as sergeant, under her officer, Miss Emma Cooke, and bore the more dignified title of "the matron." This person was styled "Corbett" by the young ladies, with whom she was in perpetual warfare. Her peculiarities were often a fertile source of inspiration for Phœbe's powers of delineation, and for Phœbe she had a rooted dislike. She was of very plain exterior, with a dry, grating precision, on which the young girl used to rally her with a sparkling but good-natured pleasantry which it was difficult to resent. Even the decorous Miss Emma used to relax into a smile when complaint was made.

The austere matron found her refuge, as such persons often do, in grim prophecy; bidding people, not very distinctly particularised, "wait and see," and that when that girl had brought scandal on the place her warnings might be remembered. But a freak on the part of Miss Phœbe had developed what was merely dislike and contempt into a deep-seated hatred, and a fixed determination to be "down on her" at the first opportunity.

Phœbe had one day noticed that the keys were left in her door, and, at the head of a small band of irregulars, who admired her daring, and were ready to follow, though they could not lead, determined to enter and commit some piratical excess. Enchanted at the opportunity, she made her dispositions, posted sentries, and led in her party. The room offered nothing to compensate for the danger of the feat, though it and its various objects had a sort of mysterious attraction which at schools seem to attach to all the objects belonging to persons in authority. They turned everything over in guilty haste. A weak sister proposed the unmeaning vengeance of upsetting the ink-bottle over the papers, just as Indians might burn a wigwam, as a memorial of their visit; but Phœbe, with higher instinct, suggested dressing up a bundle with nightcap, &c., and putting it on the bed. Suddenly a cupboard attracted attention, in which the key was left. It was promptly opened by Phœbe, who thereupon prosecuted a search in person. In an instant she reappeared, waving triumphantly an article which certainly offered damning evidence in support of an unworthy prejudice that had long obtained among the girls in reference to "Corbett's" habits. This was a slender flask, decorated with one of those flaunting labels which are associated with the stimulating produce of Cognac. This piece of conviction was received with a scream of delight, and from that moment the matron's character was hopelessly gone.

Suddenly the sound of steps were heard, and a panic ensued. They would all be captured together, as in a net. The sentry had proved false, or had been herself surprised. Phœbe alone drew up, threw her head back, and prepared for battle; the rest gathered in a corner, a frightened herd.

It was only Adelaide. There was a general cry of relief; she guessed what was on foot at once.

"Look here, Ada! Such a discovery! Shall we leave it at Miss Cooke's door?"

"Capital!" said some of the other girls; "that will expose her. Do it to-night, Phœbe."

It was understood, as a matter of course, that all such services of danger must be done by the gallant Phœbe.

She was nothing loath, and was securing the flask when Adelaide interposed.

"That would be utterly meaningless," she said, in her coldest way. "You have an opportunity," she added, suddenly, "to expose the woman's failing, and let her know that you know; that will be quite enough. We all know that she is not quite as perfect as she wants to appear. It will humiliate her sufficiently if you let her, and her alone, see that we have her secret."

Without condescending to say more, or to wait and see the result of the experiment, Adelaide slowly quitted the room, with the air as though she had suggested what was merely an act of duty.

With the quickness of genius the plan flashed upon Phœbe's brain. It would be free from detection, and at the same time inflict exquisite mortification upon her enemy, who would learn that her secret failing was discovered, and at the same time be compelled to remain silent on the matter. The flask was hurriedly wrapped up in some articles of clothing so as to assume something of the size of a human head, and was then invested with a nightcap, and the whole placed in Mrs. Corbett's bed; the face, or what answered for the face, turned to the wall.

The anticipations of the discovery that would ensue, and the compound emotions to which the victim would become a prey, were exquisite. Strange, sudden bursts of laughter, and eyes too significantly anticipating mischief, almost betrayed the members of the little gang during the day.

What Mrs. Corbett did experience was never known; but Phœbe, who almost challenged her gaze, laughed with a good-natured insolence. It was certain, too, that even the principal herself had an inkling of what had taken place. Miss Emma, of course, knew everything that occurred among the girls, just as the sergeant learns what is going on among the men; and, strange to say, the awful chief of the house was not displeased at discovering this lapse from virtue in her trusted assistant, who had hitherto presumed on a Spartan immunity from all the weaknesses of our nature. Mrs. Corbett would have been more than human if she forgave this wrong, or was not eager to have Phœbe "on the hip."

A week or two more passed by, and somehow it seemed that the Misses Cooke began to have some dim foreboding of the impending desertion of the most useful of their pupils, and began at last to be piqued by her hostility. Miss Emma grew sour, "short," and unaccommodating. She seemed to be on the look-out for causes of quarrel; she was stern, and entered into no discussion, but "required the thing to be done" in an arbitrary, autocratic way. Once she said it was time they came to an understanding. The pupil continued to bear herself with the same quiet insolence, and a sarcasm of manner more irritating than sarcasm in words.

One evening it came to pass that Miss Cross was publicly ordered to her room, into confinement until further notice, until it should be considered what should be done with her — whether the Venerable Dean Drinkwater should be called to administer his regular treatment—i.e., a summons to the "strangers' parlour" for an interview with this ecclesiastical patron (the Misses Drinkwater had been "finished" at a reduction of premium), or whether she should be sent away. But this step could not be profitably taken, as the sisters had sunk too much in the investment. What really inflamed the resentment of the heads of the house, was the discovery of Adelaide's determination to compete seriously for, which was tantamount to winning, the Dacier medal. Their annoyance at this resolve was inconceivable, as there was no way of defeating it. For the examination was usually conducted with an ostentatious air of impartiality, Dr. Drinkwater and "a Fellow of All Souls" being specially retained to set papers to the young ladies—that is, to all in the school who presented themselves. So at a fashionable bazaar some engaging young shopwoman feels a similar vexation when there is "a tie" between an aristocratic patron and some obscure clerk, who have both thrown for the prize in her lottery. Interest, inclination, all prompt her to a little hocus pocus in favour of the more desirable candidate. Miss Cooke told her pupil plainly that she should not be allowed to enter for this honour, and was told in reply that if there was any attempt to prevent her obtaining the reward due to her merits, she would appeal to the public on the day of exhibition. This bold and terrible speech was properly looked upon as "a burning of her ships," and a plain declaration of war to the knife.

It was on interchange of sharp language that Miss Cross was ordered to her room—into confinement for the evening. The young lady gathered up her books and retired. Phœbe was indignant and excited, and all through the afternoon was acting as a little incendiary, trying to inflame the popular passions and stir up something like a riot. If "No tyranny!" or "Too many Cookes spoil the soup," or some other galling reproach were but written on a small placard, she volunteered to affix it, like some petard, to the door of the obnoxious lady's room.

But the crowd was not to be stimulated to such an outrage; for the high-bred young ladies had but little sympathy with their persecuted sister, who was looked on as a sort of low Radical, much as their papas looked on the spouting workmen who led the trades-union of the district. Phœbe, indeed, was often thought to have compromised herself by her wholesale alliance with her inappropriate companion. She was considered something "plebeian" in her tastes—but the truth was she delighted in a bit of nature, or cleverness, or freedom, and this was her way of making protest against the stiff ordinances of fashion, which she flung off as impetuously as she did the fashionable strait-waistcoat which Madame Jeannette, of Regent-street, who undertook the "shape" of the young ladies, had tried to fit on her.

So all that evening Phœbe was thinking of the "poor prisoner," and inveighing against her "jailors."

As a matter of course, she had contrived, through the agency of a maid "who would do anything for Miss Phœbe," a visit to her friend in her dungeon. This gallant attempt, which involved serious risk, was made light of by Phœbe. The other was not a little softened, and kissed her with as much warmth as was consistent with her nature.

"It's a shame!" said Phœbe with glowing cheeks; "such a mean, unworthy persecution! Never mind, it can only last a short time. When you are married and have your carriage—they will die of spite and vexation. Would I not give worlds to be by when they hear the news!"

Thinking this the best comfort she could offer, Phœbe was astonished to see her friend rise and, with a burst of impatience, walk over to the window.

"That will be all at an end after to-night," she said. "He was to have been there to-night, at nine o'clock. Now, he will never come again. I care not."

"How dreadful," said Phœbe. "Still he will know that something has prevented you——"

"No," said the other, quite calmly; "he is so sensitive and vain, that he will prefer to take offence, as he did a short time ago. He only wants the excuse."

"Then he is not worth having," said Phœbe, impetuously.

"Perhaps not, for himself," said Adelaide. "But I cannot afford to be nice in my selection. There is a class you have heard of who are not allowed to be choosers. I may tell you that, not long ago, he was taking airs and patronising me as a poor girl, and I spoke my mind to him. He was affronted, and left me. Then I thought, as I said, that I was not a person entitled to the luxury of quarrelling or taking offence, so it cost me infinite trouble to bring him back. He is fickle and touchy; his vanity will be wounded at what he will consider disrespect—I can't help it. It is another little item of the debt I owe Miss Cooke."

"So it has been going on all this time?" said Phœbe. "And you never told me. How close you are!"

A plan was lighting up in Phœbe's eyes.

"Write him a note," said she, "and I shall be postman!"

Adelaide grew hard in a moment.

"I never leave anything to anyone; but I am obliged to you all the same. As I say, the thing must take its chance now. Understand me, I wish no one to interfere in the matter."

"Oh, certainly," said Phœbe, her enthusiasm at once checked. "I thought I might help you. Is there anything else that I can do?"

"Nothing. You will understand me; and I really thank you for what you propose, but in this sort of thing I prefer to depend upon myself."

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

SIR HENRY MORGAN.

It is interesting to trace the degeneration of the gentleman adventurer, of the period of the Renaissance, into the buccaneer and pirate. The former was a potential pirate, whose predatory habits were glossed over by the fame of the explorer or dignified by the steady purpose of the patriot. He was a higher development of the pirate pure and simple—the plundering, burning, and destroying Northman, a sea-robber, only occasionally great enough to advance from simple plunder to actual conquest. It was only by slow degrees that piracy took the heroic form manifested by Drake and his brave contemporaries. The heroic period did not last long, but the primeval instinct of piracy survived; the explorer, the gentleman adventurer, the gallant defender of his country, swiftly sank, first into the buccaneer, and then into the pirate, until the motto of "No peace beyond the line" was exchanged for the black flag of the marine Ishmael—who plundered, tortured, and murdered right and left, and spent his ill-gotten gains in hideous debauchery, and extravagance as devoid of elegance as were his exploits of any gleam of chivalry. I would that it were otherwise; but truth compels me to admit that, after an attentive study of the lives of the buccaneers, I can find but two good points about them—personal courage of the most reckless kind, and a fertility of resource which frequently extorts unwilling admiration. Ashore or afloat they engaged their prey, the Spaniard, without any reference to numbers, and, so far as can be ascertained, with very general success. In these days of discipline and arms of precision, it appears to us astounding that a rabble of desperadoes should have stormed fortified cities, and defeated in pitched battles the soldiery of Spain, often against the most tremendous odds. But the facts remain. Over natural and artificial obstacles the genius of the buccaneers triumphed, until their name became a terror to the well-garrisoned towns of the Spanish Main, and heavily-armed galleons slunk away in affright at the whisper that they were on the war-path. Perhaps the horrible tortures they inflicted on their prisoners had something to do with establishing this panic; but, in judging them on this score, we must recollect that they did not invent the torture. In the early days of American adventure, the Spanish possessors of the country had consigned many of their prisoners to the dungeons of the Inquisition, and it was hardly to be expected that the later marauders should forget that their predecessors had been tortured as heretics, instead of being hanged as pirates. If, however, the miseries inflicted on the inhabitants of the sea-board by the buccaneers are to be regarded as a species of retribution, it must at least be admitted that it was terrible and complete.

The great buccaneering period may be roughly said to have extended over the latter half of the seventeenth century, while the enterprises of the freebooters were assisted by the wars fomented by Louis the Fourteenth. Those among them who stood upon ceremony obtained letters of marque, and then went to work with a will; while others, who were less imbued with respect for technicalities, fought and plundered "for their own hand." In the histories of the buccaneers, as written by themselves, a sort of case is made out for them. They were originally the hunters of Hispaniola, and their name is derived from the boucan, or dried meat, which they prepared from the wild cattle. They were rough fellows these hunters, and vendors of hides and beef, living in the woods for months together, and conducting themselves, after they had sold their produce, very much in the fashion of the logwood-cutters described by Dampier.

These amiable colonists were by no means to the taste of the Spaniards, who did their best to drive them off. The French were at this time attempting to establish plantations in Tortuga, and to that end endeavoured to bring the early planters and hunters of that island, and of Hispaniola, under something approaching law and order. The consequences of this attempt were disastrous. Hunters and planters made common cause against their new masters, and being crushed by the strong hand, betook themselves to piracy. Tortuga, and, at a later date, Jamaica, became a nest of pirates, who had, according to their own account, been driven to evil courses by ill-treatment. Pierre le Grand, a Frenchman, and Bartholomew Portugues, were the first great leaders of the so-called buccaneers. Commencing with a boat, they boarded ships, and with these took other ships, until they at length commanded little fleets, and spread devastation far and wide. Rock Brasiliano was also a notable buccaneer of the early period. This worthy was a Dutchman, who obtained his cognomen by a long residence in Brazil. Flying thence to Jamaica, when the Portuguese retook Brazil from the Dutch, he entered a "society of pirates;" and after part of the crew of the ship quarrelled with the captain, and set off in a boat, was chosen the captain of the malcontents, who, fitting out a small vessel, speedily took a great plate ship. This action gained him great reputation, but "in his private affairs he governed himself very ill; for he would oftentimes appear brutish and foolish; when in drink, running up and down the streets, beating or wounding those he met; no person daring to make any resistance." He had an inveterate hatred against the Spaniards, never showing them any mercy, and "commanded several to be roasted alive, for not shewing him Hog-yards, where he might steal swine"—pork and turtle being the favourite food of the buccaneers, as punch and brandy were their drink. The exploits and cruelties of Rock Brasiliano were soon eclipsed by François Lolonois—so called from his being a native of Les Sables d'Olonne. His atrocities will not bear repetition, and made the Spaniards shudder at his name, until he came to what his biographer calls, with grim humour, "his unfortunate death." After commanding fleets and sacking cities, he at last fell into the hands of the Indians of Darien, who "tore him in pieces alive, throwing his Body limb by limb into the fire, and his Ashes into the Air, that no trace nor memory might remain of such an infamous inhuman Creature." The first honours (?) of buccaneering were thus gained by French, Dutch, and Portuguese, but the credit of producing the greatest buccaneer of them all belongs to the English, "a nation apt to piracy."

Captain—afterwards Sir Henry—Morgan, was a buccaneer or pirate, whichever the reader pleases, who narrowly missed, in the West, a career equal in notoriety to that enjoyed by Barbarossa in the Mediterranean. His dream was the foundation of a buccaneer state, a sort of Sallee or Algiers, on the Spanish Main; but whatever may have been his chances of succeeding in this project, they were ruined by the anxiety of the great representative buccaneer to take care of himself. His portrait is now before me—the image of a bluff cavalier, of the reign of his most gracious majesty King Charles the Second. A square head, with hair parted in the midst, and falling in long love-locks over the shoulders—the coiffure preceding the full-bottomed wig—a long straight nose, large eyes set wide apart, a well-cut upper and a thick, heavy, sensual under lip. A moustache, curled upward, gives a jaunty expression to an otherwise heavy-looking countenance, resting on a square-cut jowl and double chin. Altogether it is a face of power. Not delicate, not sympathetic, not intellectual; but simply strong, resolute, and steadfast. The bull neck is encircled by a cravat of the richest lace; the heavy shoulders and deep chest are clothed in cloth of gold—"lifted" probably from some mighty galleon; the arms enjoy exceptional freedom by reason of the sleeves being slashed with white satin. Across the shoulder hangs a richly-decorated sword-belt, holding the victorious cutlass of the rover. The background of this pleasant picture is appropriately filled in with a sketch of a burning town and sinking fleet.

Henry Morgan was one of those who, having been shorn themselves to begin with, pass the remainder of their lives in flaying others. The son of a rich Welsh yeoman, he found little pleasure or prospect of advancement in his father's calling, and sought the sea-coast in quest of more congenial occupation. Finding several ships at anchor bound for Barbadoes, he took service in one of these, and became the victim of a custom then prevailing. He was sold by his captain as soon as he came ashore. In the gay days succeeding the Restoration, and for long afterwards, this practice of engaging or kidnapping English folk and selling them as slaves in his majesty's plantations was, if not sanctioned by authority, quietly connived at. The lot of the men sold for a term of years was hard enough if they fell into the hands of a violent master. As people dined early, and generally got more or less intoxicated at dinner, the slightest blunder was often punished with tremendous severity. Besides the punishment of "cat-hauling"—which consisted in fixing a cat on the shoulders of a naked man, and then dragging the animal by the tail, struggling with tooth and nail, downwards to his feet—it was not unusual to lash the unhappy white slaves till they were nearly dead, and then anoint their wounds with lemon-juice mixed with salt and pepper. There is no record of how Morgan fared under his Barbadian master; but if conclusions may be drawn from his subsequent career, he was so ill-treated as to extinguish in him all pity and sympathy for his fellow-creatures. Having served his time at Barbadoes, and succeeded in obtaining his liberty, he hied him to Jamaica, there to seek new fortunes. Finding himself adrift without employment, and two piratical vessels just ready to put to sea, he at once commenced a career which has left an evil scent of blood and fire on the isthmus of Panama. He soon fell in with his new comrades' manner of living, and "so exactly, that, having performed three or four voyages with profit and success, he agreed with some of his comrades, who had got by the same voyages a little money, to joyn stocks and buy a Ship. The vessel being bought, they unanimously chose him captain and commander."

On the coasts of Campeachy, Morgan and his comrades took many vessels, and then fell in with Mansvelt, an ancient buccaneer, who was then busy in equipping a fleet with the design to land on the continent, and "pillage whatever he could." Morgan's handsome string of prizes impressed the "old hand" with an idea of his genius, and made him at once vice-admiral in the expedition. With fifteen ships, "great and small," and five hundred men—Walloons and French—they sailed from Jamaica, and took and sacked the island of St. Catherine, near Costa Rica. The buccaneers were exceedingly anxious to preserve St. Catherine as a piratical stronghold, but not proving strong enough to hold their own there, they proposed to attack Havana itself. Finding their force insufficient for this daring adventure, they fell upon Puerto el Principe, and took it; but, being disgusted at the small amount of the plunder, quarrelled among themselves. The ancient feud between the English and French broke out anew, and the freebooters parted company, Morgan determining to try his fortunes at the head of his own countrymen. Collecting nine ships and four hundred and sixty men, he put to sea, telling no man of his destination. On approaching Costa Rica he declared his intention of attacking Puerto Velo. This enterprise could not, he thought, fail, "seeing he had kept it a secret; whereby they could not have notice of his coming." Many murmured against him, alleging that they had not sufficient force to assault so strong and great a city, whereupon Morgan made a memorable and characteristic speech: "If our number is small our hearts are great. And the fewer persons we are the more union and better shares we shall have in the spoil." Puerto Velo—not far from Nombre di Dios, the scene of one of Drake's exploits—was considered the strongest place held by the Spaniards in the West Indies, excepting only Havana and Cartagena. It was defended by two castles, and a garrison of three hundred soldiers. It was a sort of Atlantic port for Panama, and was rich in plate and slaves. One after the other the castles were taken after a desperate defence, and many of the "chiefest citizens were made prisoners." But the town still held out. Morgan now ordered ten or twelve ladders to be made of such breadth that three or four men at once might ascend by them. When these were ready, he commanded "all the religious men and women whom he had taken prisoners to fix them against the walls." The unfortunate monks and nuns, driven on by the buccaneers, found no mercy from their own people, who fired on them remorselessly. Ultimately, the buccaneers took the town, the governor, who conducted himself valiantly throughout, dying sword in hand. As was usual in these cases, the place was sacked, the prisoners put to the rack to make them reveal their real or supposed hidden treasures, and a ransom of a hundred thousand pieces of eight was demanded on pain of the town being burnt. The governor of Panama, incensed at the outrage on Puerto Velo, sent a detachment to demolish the buccaneers; but the latter made short work of the Spanish troops, whereat the governor, in a sort of anti-climax, threatened the marauders with high pains and penalties unless they should presently depart from Puerto Velo. Morgan replied that, unless "the contribution-money were paid down, he would certainly burn the whole city, and then leave it, demolishing beforehand the castles and killing the prisoners." In a few days the ransom was paid, but the president of Panama was so amazed that some four hundred men should take a city defended by castles, without having ordnance to raise batteries, that he sent to Captain Morgan "desiring some small pattern of those arms, wherewith he had taken, with such vigor, so great a city." Morgan received the messenger "very kindly and with great civility," and gave him a pistol and a few small bullets to carry back to his master, telling him withal, "He desired him to accept that slender pattern of the arms wherewith he had taken Puerto Velo, and keep them for a twelvemonth, after which time he promised to come to Panama and fetch them away." The Spaniard quickly returned the ill-omened present to Morgan, thanking him for lending him "weapons that he needed not," and sent him withal a gold ring with this message—"That he desired him not to give himself the labour of coming to Panama as he had done to Puerto Velo, for he did assure him he should not speed so well here as he had done there."

After sacking various cities, notably Maraicaybo, and leading the Spaniards a terrible life generally, Morgan collected together an army of well-seasoned buccaneers of all nations, principally English, and prepared to put into execution the campaign attempted in vain by Oxenham, his precursor, and by Sawkins and others, his degenerate descendants. As preliminaries to the great venture the island of St. Catherine was taken, and subsequently the castle of Chagres. At the latter place the Spaniards defended themselves "very briskly," keeping up a heavy fire, and crying out, "Come on, ye English dogs, enemies to God and our king, let your other companions that are behind come on, too; ye shall not go to Panama, this bout." Some desperate fighting occurred here, the Spaniards defending themselves right valiantly. The buccaneers were driven back again and again, but yet came up to the attack with undiminished vigour, hurling their fire-pots among their enemies, who responded with like missiles, until, as the buccaneers were getting roughly handled, "there happened a remarkable accident which occasioned their victory. One of the pirates being wounded by an arrow in the back, which pierced his body through, he pulled it out boldly at the side of his breast, and, winding a little cotton about it, he put it into his musket and shot it back to the castle. But the cotton, being kindled by the powder, fired two or three houses in the castle, being thatched with palm-leaves, which the Spaniards perceived not so soon as was necessary." A tremendous explosion ensued, which threw the Spaniards into confusion; and the pirates, having burnt their way through the stockades, at last captured the castle, with a loss of one hundred killed, besides seventy wounded. On the 18th day of August, 1670, Captain Morgan set forth from the castle of Chagres with twelve hundred men, five boats with artillery, and thirty-two canoes. Working their way up the river, the little army made only six leagues on the first day, and came to "a spot called de los Braços." Here they went ashore to stretch their limbs, crippled in the crowded boats, and skirmished round the country in search of provisions. But they found none, as the Spaniards, advised of their arrival, carried everything off, and the greater part were thus forced to pass the night "with only a pipe of tobacco," by way of refreshment. The river being very low, they were obliged to leave their boats at the conclusion of the next day. The genius of organisation had not forsaken them, for they left a hundred and sixty men to guard the boats and secure their retreat, while the main body pushed on across the isthmus, still working with such few canoes as were able by their light draught to pass up the river, encumbered by shoals and those impediments known in the Mississippi as snags and sawyers. Everywhere they found the country denuded of all kinds of provisions, and as buccaneers were accustomed to victual on the enemy, they were soon reduced to sore straits. On the fourth day—according to an eye-witness and comrade—"the ferment of their stomachs was now so sharp as to gnaw their very bowels." Nevertheless, they were nothing daunted, and, finding a heap of leather bags, devoured them for want of anything better. For the information of those curious in cookery, it may be well to show how they treated this very unpromising food. First they sliced it in pieces, then they beat it between two stones, and rubbed it, often dipping it in water to make it supple and tender. "Lastly, they scraped off the hair and broyl'd it." Being thus cooked, they cut it into small morsels and ate it, helping it down with frequent gulps of water, which, by good fortune, they had at hand. On the ninth day they, more than half-starved and worn out with fatigue and fasting, descried the highest steeple of Panama, and at once threw up their hats for joy, as if the campaign were over, and the riches of the city were already theirs. The Spaniards appear to have been rather slow in going to work. To begin with, they made a great show of blockading the buccaneers in their temporary encampment, and laid many ambuscades to open fire as they approached the city. But Morgan had good guides, and by the advice of one of them, tried "another way." Hence the Spaniards were compelled to leave their breastworks and batteries, and come out to meet them in the open, with two squadrons of cavalry, four regiments of foot, and a huge number of wild bulls, driven on by innumerable negroes and Indians. When the buccaneers saw the opposing force, "few or none but wished themselves at home," but after some wavering, they made up their minds to "fight resolutely, or die, for no Quarter could be expected from an Enemy, on whom they had committed so many Cruelties." Occupying a little hill, they sent forward two hundred of their best marksmen. Descending the hill, this detachment marched straight upon the Spaniards, who awaited them firmly enough, but could not make much use of their cavalry—on account of the field being full of "quaggs." The two hundred buccaneers, putting one knee on the ground, began the battle with "a full volley of shot." An attempt was then made to throw the marauders into disorder by driving the wild bulls against them, but the animals took fright and ran away—the few who rushed among the buccaneers being instantly shot. The Spanish horse being discomfited, the foot threw down their arms and ran away to shelter themselves in the town. There an obstinate resistance was made, but in spite of barricades, cannon, and men, the fury of the buccaneers prevailed, although their numbers were considerably thinned in the assault. The town taken, Morgan forbade his men to touch any wine, saying he had intelligence that it was all poisoned—his real fear being, that if his men were not restrained, they would become frightfully intoxicated, and prove an easy prey to the enemy. The work of plunder and destruction now commenced. Churches and monasteries, warehouses and palaces, were sacked and burnt; but as the inhabitants had hidden their valuables, and run away into the woods, the buccaneers had some difficulty in getting their booty together. To expedite this important part of the business, they made excursions into the country, seized as many of the inhabitants as they could find, and put them to most "exquisite tortures to make them confess both other people's goods and their own." The ruffians racked and roasted their unhappy prisoners, and occasionally applied a peculiar torture—twisting a cord round the forehead of a prisoner "till his eyes appeared as big as eggs, and were ready to fall out." They spared neither age nor sex, and one shudders to think of the fate of the many beautiful women who fell into their hands. Morgan himself was peculiarly susceptible to the attractions of the fair sex. Among the unfortunate prisoners was the wife of a Spanish merchant, a woman of singular beauty, with raven hair, and a dazzling complexion. The buccaneer leader fell in love with the lady, who had been told, like other Spanish women, by husbands and priests, that buccaneers were not men, but "heretics," monstrous beasts, fearful to look upon. The young Spaniard was therefore agreeably surprised to find that her captors were "men like Spaniards after all." Her joy at finding herself in the hands of buccaneers rather than wild beasts was premature. For a while all went well; but having received Morgan's advances coldly, she soon became aware of the real character of the man. It is hardly unfair to the memory of this great freebooter to say that in him were epitomised all the vices of generations of buccaneers and pirates. He was cruel, tyrannical, and sensual; avaricious and faithless even to his own comrades. He pressed his suit, offering to pour all the wealth of the Indies at the feet of the beautiful Spaniard, if she would consent to his wishes. She refused him absolutely, and threatened to kill him or herself with her poniard if he came near her. Morgan was furious, but found in gratified cupidity a solace for disappointed love. The lady was flung into a dark cellar, and informed that unless thirty thousand pieces of eight were paid for her ransom she should be sold as a slave in Jamaica. As the buccaneering army commenced its march from Panama laden with plunder, the beautiful prisoner was led apart from the rest between two buccaneers. The triumphant army carried off from the burned and ruined city one hundred and seventy-five horses and mules laden with gold, silver, and jewels, and five or six hundred prisoners, men and women, to whom Morgan replied that they, unless they were ransomed, should assuredly all be sold into slavery. These poor wretches were driven on by blows from musket-barrels and prods from pikes, and the air was filled with the sounds of lamentation. The fair Spaniard had endeavoured to pay the money for her ransom. She had entrusted two priests with the knowledge of a secret hoard, but these creatures had taken the money and employed it in ransoming their own friends. Morgan soon brought them to book. He dismissed the lady at once, and carried the monks on to Chagres till their ransom was paid.

Now comes a portion of the story which strips the buccaneering character of its last thin coat of chivalrous varnish. There may be honour among thieves—I don't believe there is—but there was certainly none among Morgan's men. As an instance of the mutual distrust which existed among these brigands, may be cited Morgan's command that every man should be searched before the division of spoil commenced. To divert suspicion from himself he first submitted to the search, being well prepared for that ordeal. At Chagres he divided the booty. The murmurs against him now rose to a menacing height. According to his calculation the share of each man was only two hundred pieces of eight, a ridiculous dividend on the capture of a great city, from which every one had expected at least a thousand. The jewels also were unfairly sold; the "admiral"—for Morgan really held a kind of commission from Sir Thomas Modyford, governor of Jamaica—and his cabal buying them very cheap. Matters had now assumed a threatening aspect. The French buccaneers swore that they had been cheated by the English, and declared they would have the admiral's life. But he was equal to the occasion, gave them the slip, and arrived in Jamaica with the immense treasure of which he had defrauded his comrades in crime. The Sir Thomas Modyford mentioned above, who, doubtless, had a share in Morgan's plunder, was recalled, and the buccaneer leader himself was sent over to England; when, backed by his commission, he could hardly be hanged, and, as an alternative, was knighted and sent out to Jamaica as commissioner of the Admiralty. Here it would seem he married and lived in great wealth and splendour, not, however, without having his ears assailed from time to time by the menacing voices of his swindled comrades, who swore to be even with him, and laid unsuccessful plots to destroy him. The wonder is that, among so many desperadoes, not one could be found to pistol him. The buccaneers delayed their revenge too long, for, in 1680, Sir Henry Morgan was left in Jamaica by Lord Carlisle as deputy-governor, and signalised his reign by hanging every buccaneer he could catch. In the reign of James the Second the notorious knight was thrown into prison, where he remained for three years. On his release he disappears from history. Whether he died full of years and dignity, or like a dog as he deserved, there is no evidence to show.

KEANE MALCOMBE'S PUPIL.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER VI.

Patiently waiting till the first torrent of my grief has spent itself, and I am lying back weak and exhausted, but once more calm, upon my pillow, Nannie says, with an anxious, troubled look upon her face:

"I'd be well pleased if the minister was back, Miss Mabel."

Thinking that the kindly creature, seeing how sorely I am in need of help and comfort, longs for my master to be at hand, I make no reply beyond a deep sigh, as I think of that faithful friend, absent when most needed; but her next words put me to shame for the selfishness born of sorrow.

"It's the mistress I'm thinking of; there's some change over her I don't like the looks of."

"Oh, Nannie!"

And I start to my feet, and make for the door, every selfish grief forgotten for the time being, in anxious dread of evil to the one creature Heaven seems to have left me. But the door is quickly shut and locked, and Nannie points with indignant finger to the looking-glass. "Lord's sake!" she says, "Miss Mabel, do you want to frighten the mistress clean daft wi' the sight of sic a face as that, and she in mortal sickness, and easy scared!"

She draws me opposite the looking-glass, where I see reflected a woe-begone, dishevelled, white-faced, red-eyed woman, certainly no fit object to enter a sick-room.

Some women require a long time to efface the trace of tears. I don't. Perhaps this is in consequence of my having little or no bloom and colour to lose, a fact upon which my candid friend Mrs. Vandaleur was once kind enough to remark. Plenty of cold water soon renders my appearance less appalling, and Nannie seems inclined to unbar the door, and let me go to our poor sufferer. But I want to understand plainly the extent of her fears.

"You don't think," I say, looking pleadingly into my companion's face, "that Auntie is very much worse to-day? You don't think——" But here it is difficult to put my thought into words, and I stop.

"I think the Lord's going to take her to himself, Miss Mabel; and it's best to say the truth out, and have done with it. I'd be blithe to say cheerier words, if I dared; but there's that look upon her face, that tells me she's not long to bide wi' us. Don't 'ee greet again, dearie—don't 'ee!" for I have covered my face with my hands, not to "greet," as Nannie thinks, but to pray for strength to bear this new pain.

As I enter the quiet room, where the shaded lamp casts a soft light on the worn face upon the pillow, and the thin restless hands moving uneasily on the coverlet, my heart fails me; for gathering round the eyes and mouth is that strange grey shade, which I know to be the livery of death.

"Is that you, dearie?" says the feeble voice. "It seems a long time since you were here, and I've no' been feeling just well at all; but I knew the boy Donald was with you, and I would not let Nannie call for you."

Such a sense of all I am about to lose in her—such a sense of the loneliness that will be for me, when that feeble voice is hushed, never more on earth to speak such words of tenderness—comes over me, that I throw myself upon my knees beside the bed, and cast my arms about the poor weak frame, while the tears stream from my eyes.

Auntie does not seem surprised or distressed at this outbreak; she lays her hand upon my head, and speaks comfortingly to me, as though I were again the child of old days, weeping over some childish trouble.

"Don't be greeting sae sair," she says; "it's bad to pull too hard against the Lord's will." And then, as my sobs grow quiet: "I'm glad we've found out how well we love each other, before I leave you, child. My hard Scotch ways might well have made you think I had no lovingness in me; but you know better now, don't you, dearie?"

I have but time to press a fond kiss on the dear worn face, when Nannie's teatray bumps gently against the door, and the scones make their appearance, together with a tiny china cup of rich cream.

"Try and taste a bit, if you please, mistress?" says Nannie, with a furtive scowl at my tear-stained face; "you're weak for want of food, and here's Miss Mabel never had no tea! But it's hot and ready in the parlour below." Here Nannie looks at me, and hesitates a moment. "Mistress Forsythe is below-stairs, too; she's called to ask for the mistress, hearing she was no' just so weel the day."

This last assertion is a piece of pure invention on Nannie's part, as I discover on entering the room where Donald's mother waits me. She makes no inquiry after Auntie, and is indeed evidently unaware of her increased illness; and one glance at her face is enough to tell me what has brought her to Whitegates at such an unusual hour. But dreading to enter upon the subject foremost in my thoughts and hers, I take a hurried refuge in the commonplace, and express my surprise at her being out so late, alone.

"I did not come alone," she says, "except from the gate."

And a shiver runs through me, for I know that Donald has turned away from Whitegates, like some stranger.

There is silence again, and Mrs. Forsythe turns very pale, and the hand that she rests on the mantelshelf trembles. I feel that the evil moment is to be deferred no longer, when suddenly the door opens, and Nannie, evidently in sore trouble of mind, stands before us.

"The mistress wants you, Mistress Forsythe," she says, her lips twitching nervously as she speaks. "She's very low, and easy troubled, and set on seeing you, this directly minute." Then poor faithful Nannie steals inside, and softly closes the door. "For the Lord's dear sake," she says, standing close to Mrs. Forsythe, and looking pleadingly in her face, "say nothing to trouble the poor boddie to-night; she's sair stricken, sair stricken, my lady;" and before either of us can say a word, Nannie is gone.

"Is this so, Mab? I am so sorry! I did not know there was any change for the worse," says Mrs. Forsythe. And I, standing between her and the door, take courage, and speak what is in my mind:

"Yes, it is true, Auntie is very ill—so ill that I think the end is near. She knows nothing—nothing of—what I have to trouble me; and I beg of you—dear Mrs. Forsythe, I entreat of you, by the memory of our old friendship—help me in keeping the knowledge of it away from her!"

She seems touched to some new, strange pity, as I speak.

"Yours is a brave heart, Mabel; why have you let it be uncandid towards me? Why——"

But I interrupt her hurriedly.

"Come and see Auntie now, and after I will walk part way home with you."

Auntie is excited by seeing Mrs. Forsythe. "I seem to have a new strength to-night," she says, a flickering pink flush upon her cheek; "but the day's been a wearisome time. It was kind of you, Mistress Forsythe, to call and ask for me so readily. Ah! truly I thank Heaven to leave my poor child here in such good hands! You and the boy Donald will aye watch over her tenderly; it's just a 'tower of strength' to me in my weakness to think of that!" I cast an imploring look at the grave face of Donald's mother, and then she answers, "Mab will never be without friends, Miss Fraser; but I think no one can ever replace your love and tenderness to your adopted child!" Ah me! how my aching heart echoes the truth of her words! Never, never more, shall I find such love as that which is drifting from me now!

It is a bright, chill autumn night, and as Mrs. Forsythe and I walk down the avenue, I am glad to draw the "grey cloud" I have picked up in the hall closely around me. Perhaps, however, my feeling of cold arises from nervous agitation; silence is so trying when we know some dreaded words are to be spoken; and my companion maintains a silence I dare not, and cannot, break.

At length we cross the stile, and enter the Abbeylands fields.

The white mist lies low, and above it the moon sails in a sea of dark blue sky. Our dresses rustle against the short crisp stubble that is all the sickle has left of the waving grain, and the corn-crake keeps up its harsh, monotonous, grating cry, as if "keening" over the fields shorn of their golden glory.

Now Mrs. Forsythe speaks, and her voice has a troubled, faltering sound.

"Child! don't you think I feel for you? don't you think my heart is aching for you, even when most I feel that it is best to be as it is—best for you, and best for Donald?"

I am in no mood to spare myself, so I say, in a hard cold voice, that covers an awful stab of pain at her last words:

"You said I had been uncandid. To whom, and when, have I been so?"

I step before her, and stand defiant in her path, so that she cannot choose but stop short. In the same sad voice, and without being roused to any resentment by my defiant manner, she answers me:

"I have often thought lately, Mabel, of some lines you once read to me long ago—

Dead love may live again; but through all time
No mason can up-build the fallen tower
Of trust.

It has been so with you and me. When first I was told that you had given your confidence to a stranger, had spoken of me and mine, and earnestly entreated that what you had said might be religiously kept from me, I suffered—I suffered intensely; for, Mabel, I have loved you very dearly."

All my defiant humour is gone. I am trembling, as I see the net that is round me. I seem to hear a soft, false, lying voice say, "I will respect your confidence, dear child!"

"When first Mrs. Vandaleur—for I do not deal in mystery, and am speaking in a full, and, maybe, last confidence to you—told me of what you had said to her, she did so in pure kindness of heart, wishing to let me know that you were troubled with sensitive fears as to my full approbation of my son's choice; and with genuine distress she saw the view I took of what was, to me, so unseemly a confidence on your part."

Such a vivid picture of Mrs. Vandaleur's "distress" comes into my mind, that I can hardly keep down an hysterical and painful laugh. Evidently troubled by my strange silence, Mrs. Forsythe speaks appealingly:

"Why could you not trust me, Queenie? Why did you desecrate our friendship by speaking of my inmost thoughts to a stranger? Have you no explanation to give me?"

"No, none!" and I clasp my hands tightly together, and look up into her face, "I have nothing to say—not a single word to say—about Mrs. Vandaleur, or anything she may have told you. I have done you no wrong—or your son either. I have given him up—given him up, though it has torn my heart out to do so, because I saw that his love was mine no longer. And now, let me go, and let the past lie; it hurts too much, this bringing up of things that are dead."

"Poor child! poor child!" she says, for my voice has become a moan of pain, and the tears fall down her face. And thus I see her, for the last time, and take her hand, and hold it against my bosom; then let it fall, and speed through the fields. I reach the white gate, pass up the avenue, and there, at the open door, stands my master—my master, whom I think to be miles away from us and all our troubles!

The joyous exclamation of welcome dies upon my lips, for on Keane Malcombe's face is a strange look of awe and grief.

"Come quickly, child!" he says, half leading, half carrying me up the stairs. "Her life may be measured by minutes now!"

Supported in Nannie's arms, a grey pallor on her face, each breath drawn with labour and pain, Aunt Janet's eyes are turned fondly and expectantly to the door, looking for the child of her love. The excitement of Mrs. Forsythe's visit, and the unexpected arrival of the minister, may have tried her feeble strength too sorely. Be this as it may, she had scarcely greeted my master, when a sudden faintness and exhaustion had come on; and leaving poor troubled Nannie with her mistress, he had hurried downstairs to search for me.

I fling myself on my knees by the bed, and she raises her feeble arm to put it about my neck.

"Oh speak to me! speak to me, dear, before you leave me!" I cry, half beside myself with grief. But Auntie will never speak to me again; the power of speech is gone, and only in the faint pressure of her hand, and in the gaze of the dying eyes that never cease to look upon my face, can I read the loving, tender thoughts that are in her heart for me.

I hear my master's voice begin the prayer that Christ taught, but I do not join in it; I am watching every passing change on the dear face so close to mine.

"Thy kingdom come!"

As the words pass my master's lips, I see that Auntie is looking at me no more, and that for her God's kingdom has already come!

All the flowers were dead when Auntie died. There were no roses to put into her cold hands, no violets to lay upon her breast; but tears fall on her still white face, and Nannie and I watch by turn in the darkened room till the cold chill morning, when they take my dead from me, and I am left alone at silent, desolate Whitegates.

The very day after Auntie's funeral, strange news comes to the village of the "great folks" up at Abbeylands.

Sir Ralph Forsythe, Donald's rich and childless uncle, has died suddenly, and Donald inherits his vast estate "down south," whither the heir is summoned with all speed.

The village is bewildered by so many important events happening at one time; and the chief gossip of the place, one Sandy Sim, complains to Nannie of such an untoward glut of news, "the noo," when, at other seasons, hardly as much is going as will give material for a "tidy crack wi' a neebor, mak' as muckle of it as a boddie may!"

Aunt Janet's will is also a subject of much public interest, for Whitegates, by the will of its original owner, passes away to a distant cousin on my mother's side; and not all the fealty of "the village" to "poor Mistress Fraser" can prevent many exciting and interesting speculations as to "what the new-comers may be like."

But even yet more startling news is to fall upon the ears of the community. The minister has seen some mighty learned English Doctor during his stay in those uncivilised countries which lie south of the Tweed, and from him has heard of wonderful mineral springs in some country "out of all calculation, ye ken, sae far frae Scotland;" and these springs work grand cures in persons afflicted like the minister's wife. And so, with the faint fond hope that his "Lizzie" may find healing yet, and one day wander again with him among the flowers and fields he loves, my master is to set off with her on a long and trying journey, and Mabel Meredith is to go with them. A new minister—a stranger, from the far North—

is to take Mr. Malcombe's place meanwhile; and what with this novelty in the way of a spiritual leader, and fresh inmates at Whitegates, the place will be in a regular ferment, and long winter evenings will be hardly long enough to discuss the many and varied points of interest and opinion.

That Miss Mabel is not, after all, to be "the leddie of the great hoose," is by this time an accepted fact among our humble neighbours; but I think Nannie is held in too great dread for many questions to be put to her, and therefore curiosity has to remain content with the bare fact.

All that Aunt Janet had to leave is mine—enough to spare me all anxious thoughts of the future—and when my master asks me to go with him and his Lizzie to a strange, distant land, I eagerly and gladly accept the loving offer of a home with them, for I have a ceaseless longing to escape from scenes that have been fraught with so much pain, and, alas! are to me haunted by the ghosts of dead joys.

The river will sing the same sweet lullaby to the lilies on its breast as of old, but, with no Donald to wander with me on its banks, what can the song of the river say, that is not sadness and pain? The sweet pink-faced roses may cluster about Whitegates; but through the window they frame, I may never more watch for his coming! Auntie's chair is empty, and her half-finished knitting lies on the little table by the window; silent is the voice that loved me, even when it was chiding my careless ways. Why should I stay where all about me are voices that, like the "sough" of the autumn wind in the pine-trees, only weep and wail?

In these days of my sorrow I am grateful to Mrs. Forsythe, in that she does not try to see me before she leaves Abbeylands, to go with her son to take possession of his new domain. I feel that she knows another interview between us would but be added pain, and could do no good; and I am glad—oh, so unutterably glad!—to be spared such an ordeal again!

Not so forbearing, however, is "mine enemy." Late one afternoon I see her, as I pass the turret window, coming up the avenue, attired in a dainty costume, in which black and silver-grey predominate; and I recognise, with a cold shiver of disgust, that this is what is called "complimentary mourning" for dear Auntie.

Thus I see her coming, mincingly, and I rush downstairs and meet Nannie rushing up, for she, too, has espied the advancing figure. I grasp her bare arm in no gentle hold; I am weary, worn out by a long day's painful attention to those dreadful after-details of the loss of one dear to us, that make the eyes dim with weeping, and I cannot face Mrs. Vandaleur. "Say I'm ill—gone away—dead—anything; but don't let me see her. Nannie, I shall die if you let her in!"

Nannie's face is pledge sufficient, and I beat a hasty retreat to poor Auntie's room, leaving the door open, so that I can hear Nannie parley with the invader.

A soft cooing voice, with a suitable tone of grief, that renders it like a distressed pigeon, tenderly inquires after my well-being.

"Could I see her for a moment or two? It might rouse her a little, you know."

"It might rouse her more than would be good for her," answers Nannie's hard clear voice; "and it's nothing but quiet and rest as Miss Mabel wants, ma'am. She's pretty well, and only needing sleep, and she can't see no one—and is much obliged to you for calling to ask for her; and that's all the message."

"But, my good woman," persists the visitor, "you have not told her who it is. I feel sure she would see me."

"She did see you, ma'am, coming up the avenue, and she gave the message to me as I gave it to you."

Mrs. Vandaleur is apparently somewhat taken aback by this last piece of pleasing information, and makes no further attempt to storm the garrison.

"Give my best, my very best love to Miss Mabel, and tell her I came to try and speak a few words of comfort, and say that I am going to England in a few days' time."

"The Lord be praised," says Nannie, and after a long and unpleasantly suggestive pause continues, "for all His mercies! Miss Mabel don't want for friends or comfort either; she's going to foreign parts before long, with the minister and his wife; and I'm a-going too myself."

There is a subtle change in Mrs. Vandaleur's voice that tells me with what inward satisfaction she hears of my approaching hegira.

"That will be such a nice change for her. Say I shall be so glad if I can do anything for her."

But Nannie interrupts this effusive speech.

"There can be no manner of occasion for anyone to see to Miss Mabel while I'm here, thanking you kindly all the same for good intentions, and wishing you good-morning, ma'am, and a safe journey to England."

I have a dreadful suspicion that Nannie, in her zealous ire, has "let slap" the door with more vigour than is absolutely needful; and a grim smile which adorns her hard features, as she informs me of Mrs. Vandaleur's departure, rather leads me to suppose this idea is correct.

The gloaming is coming on—that dim pleasant time which I used to revel in, and of which dear Auntie would say that no one but an "idle chiel" would be so fond. Tap, tap, go the long bare fingers of the rose-trees against the bay-window, and each gust of wind brings down a dancing shower of leaves from the tall willows on the lawn. My weariness of mind and body has reached that pitch at which complete inaction is a luxury, and the tired mind seeks rest from long painful tension in dwelling upon every trivial object that meets the eye. The firelight is struggling with the dying daylight for the mastery; and I lie back upon the low couch, near the window, and watch how every moment the fantastic shadows on the wall grow more distinct. Outside, the clouds are drifting, hurrying across the sky as if bound on errands of mighty import; and I can hear a faint murmur—faint only from distance—which I know to be the sound of the river, swollen with heavy rains, and rushing madly down the rocky falls below the bend, where the lilies lie in summer, and where my sweet-brier tree is shedding tears of scented leaves over the summer that is gone. I am weary enough to feel glad that everything is past and over; weary enough to ask for nothing but to be left in rest and peace—so weary that even sorrow itself seems sleeping for a while.

Is it not often—just when we are congratulating ourselves that the worst is over, the deep waters all waded through, the pain endured, and the time of rest come—that, suddenly, we have to bear the extremest pang of all? I have not heard my master's quiet footstep on the stairs; and he enters the room and comes over to where I lie, almost too weary to get up and greet him.

"All in the dark, my child?" he says, and lays a hand upon my head. I look up into the kind face, and there I see something that makes me spring to my feet.

"What is it?" I say, gasping out the words, and clinging to his hand with the passionate appeal of one who has suffered so much, that further endurance seems impossible. I stand in the window, leaning against the wall, and wait till he shall see fit to tell me on what errand of pain he comes—patient, more from weakness than will. My master is not one to keep a sufferer in suspense long.

"I have had the boy Donald with me. He is in sore trouble—sore, bitter trouble of spirit."

A shiver goes through me as my master speaks; but I do not say a word.

"To-morrow he and his mother leave Abbeylands, and I have promised to give you this myself, and to bring an answer to the boy; he is waiting for me in the lane."

"This" is a letter. Now, during our short betrothal, I have had but few letters from Donald. It stirs me to the very depths of my nature to close my hand over the letter that Donald has written to me.

The fire burns cheerily, and I crouch down, after an old childish fashion of mine, upon the rug, and read Donald's letter by the firelight.

This is what it says:

"It is so hard to leave you alone in your sorrow, Mabel! Do you really, truly mean me to abide by what you said that afternoon? Only one word—one single word—'Come;' and I will be by your side, comforting you, or trying my best to do so. Let us forget all that has come between us, and be as we once were; I could not sleep last night for thinking of your loneliness and grief. I am waiting outside for your answer. Mabel! let me come to you?

"DONALD."

Tears stream from my eyes; I kiss the letter with a passion of tenderness; I hold it clasped against my breast. My master watches me in silence.

At length my mad ecstasy is over. The letter is in my hand, and I read it again; but this time with a clearer vision. The mist is clearing away; I see the right path. We cannot put aside "all that has come between us." If I take Donald's generous, pitiful impulse, and build my life's love on it, I shall build upon the sand; for I know Donald loves, not me—not this weary, grief-worn woman standing in the firelight—but fair-faced, golden-haired Maud, his more fitting mate!

I cross to where my master is standing, and cling about his neck in an abandonment of grief. "Oh, help me! help me, master, to do the right! It is so hard—so hard; and life seems one terrible desolation without him!" He holds me close, as a tender father might, and kisses my upturned face; but now, as ever, the faithful voice shrinks not from the words of truth, be they never so bitter, never so fraught with pain!

"Child! if you are sure that you are acting for the best—if you are sure Donald's love is no longer yours—then, 'cut off the right hand.' Better so than to found your happiness on what has no reality. The boy besought me not to influence you against him, and I will say no more than this—be guided by your own heart. I have never known its voice unfaithful to the truth."

Once more the tempter struggles for the mastery. I picture to myself what would be if I were to say that one word, "Come!" I picture the old sound of the quick step on the stairs; and then, the loving arms round me, my tired head resting on his breast, the dear bright face bent over me, his lips on mine; but here the dread memory of that last passionless kiss comes like a stab—that kiss that was the requiem of a dead love! I dash away my tears, and chase the dreamy firelight away, making the room a blaze of candle-light. Quickly I trace the words that seal my life to a loveless loneliness for ever:

"Thank you for your generous letter. I shall always like to remember that you wrote it, when my sorrow came upon me, and you thought I wanted comfort. All I have to say to you I said that day. May Heaven bless you, and all you love, now and always. MABEL."

Hastily I seal my letter. Silently my master watches me.

I put it into his hand. Then he says, in a faltering, tearful voice:

"The Lord bless my child, and comfort her in her sorrow!"

So he is gone! And I have a second time cast from me the light of my eyes, the glory and brightness of my life!

The lane turns round at our gate, and passes behind Whitegates, and the window of my room looks that way. In a moment I have gained the room, noiselessly opened the little casement, and am crouching on the floor in the dusky light, listening for Donald's footstep.

There! It is coming; he is passing below the window; he knows not that I am praying for him—"so near," yet, oh, "so far away." God bless my Donald—mine for this one short hour by virtue of his pitiful tender thought of me in my grief and pain—mine never again, I know; but mine to weep and pray for just this once.

Fainter, fainter grow the sounds of his footsteps.

I cannot hear them now at all. Listen as I will, Donald has passed out of my life, and my love-story is ended!

CHAPTER VII. FIVE YEARS AFTER.

I FEEL that it would be a very satisfactory ending to my story if I could tell how some happy chance threw me again across Mrs. Forsythe's path, and gave me an opportunity of explaining to her all the cruel misconception of the past, and set us once more "heart to heart and soul to soul," as in the old days when we loved each other so well, and Donald—bright, boyish Donald—was so dear to both!

And it may be so some day—even in that day "when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed"—but not now, for death has made, long since, of our estrangement an eternal record. And of my own life, meanwhile, what shall I say? It is too busy to be sad. The garb I wear is one that pledges me to hard toil in the byways and the crowded alleys of life, among the poor, the sick, and the fallen; for I have become a member of a Church that guides her children with a firmer hand than the church of my childhood. Thus my life is not an unhappy one. It is the useless, the idle, the feeble, that spend their days in moaning over an irrecoverable past; those who toil for a Divine Master could not see to walk in the way that He has set before them, were their eyes ever blinded by tears.

And Mrs. Vandaleur?

One fair spring-day, about five years after Aunt Janet's death, I am unlucky enough to miss a certain train, and have to wait at the station for another. As I stand, looking helplessly at the clock—as though with a feeble hope that, by so doing, I can accelerate its progress—I hear a never-forgotten voice cooing to a porter about some luggage. Yes; there can be no mistake, it is Mrs. Vandaleur, and about her are all the signs of great worldly prosperity. As soon as she sees me, there is the same fling outwards of the fat hands, the same ecstatic glance upwards as of old.

"It is you!" she says, rushing towards me, as though her whole life, since we parted, had been one wild longing to see me again. "It is Mabel Meredith! I should have known you anywhere by your eyes, in spite of that dress. Dear me! I remember hearing you had joined the English Church, and turned nun. How very interesting!"

But I am looking beyond the voluble lady, to where a pleasant-faced woman holds by the hand a child—a child with Donald's eyes, dark-grey eyes with the black lashes.

"That is Maud's eldest," says Mrs. Vandaleur, "the young heir of Abbeylands. Come here, Theodore, and kiss the lady."

Theodore kisses the lady, and the lady kisses Theodore, calmly enough to all appearance, but with a storm of feeling running riot in her heart.

Hitherto words have not come to me very readily in answer to all the gushing of my companion, but as she chatters on, I see that cruel malice lurks beneath an apparently aimless torrent of questions, and I resolve that not by so much as a passing quiver of the lip will I gratify her wish to see me suffer.

"I am not a nun," I say very quietly, as she again animadverts on it being "so charming," and "so romantic," to find me in the sister's dress. "And I am very well, and very busy, and——"

"Happy too, eh?" she says, interrupting me quickly, and with her head on one side, as usual with her when aiming some tiny poisoned dart at a human heart.

"Yes; happy too," I answer, looking steadily into the steel-coloured, shadowless eyes.

"How nice that is! Of course you know that our poor friend, Mrs. Forsythe, has passed away?"

I bow my head in a silent affirmative.

"Ah! poor dear! she died with her hand in mine!"

I think Mrs. Vandaleur knows that I feel she is lying, for she looks away from me rather hurriedly.

"By-the-way, she spoke of you, not long before she died; she was unconscious most of the time after the—the seizure—but she had lucid intervals—yes—poor soul! she knew us all at times!"

I am trying to keep down my wild impatience to know what my old friend said of me, hoping that she sent me some loving word from her bed of death, but the consciousness that my companion is enjoying my suspense makes me hide all indications of distress.

She has told me that she and the child are en route for Abbeylands, and I know the North train will be up in ten minutes. Will she tell me before that time is gone?

"She spoke of me, you tell me, Mrs. Vandaleur. What did she say?"

"Oh, nothing particular. She seemed to take Maud for you once, for she called her Mab; and on another occasion, when I was with her alone—she liked me to be always with her, you know."

"And being alone with you, she spoke of me?"

"Yes: she seemed to wish to see you. She said, 'Why doesn't she come?' and I was distressed, you know, that she should agitate herself."

"Naturally; and, to soothe her, you led her to suppose I was either unable, or unwilling to come?"

"Unable, my dear Mabel, unable;" and she laid her hand impressively upon my arm.

"You never told her son that she asked to see me!"

I make this remark as an assertion, not an interrogation. She purses up her mouth and looks wise, and gives the faintest possible shrug of her shoulders.

"Why—no. You see it would have been useless; and, indeed, she was never properly conscious after that occasion, poor dear! She is in a better place, and we ought not to mourn!"

"Yes; she is out of the power of misrepresentation now."

There is a silence, and Mrs. Vandaleur looks slightly crestfallen; then recovers herself.

"My daughter and her husband cannot tear themselves away from London while the season lasts; Maud is so much admired, and made so much of, and Donald is so proud of her being such a brilliant star of the fashionable world. It is really delightful—Arcadian, I may say—to see how he idolises her; it makes me quite sad, I declare, at times, when it reminds me of my own young happy days."

I make no reply to this tirade, and look longingly in the direction whence the North train will eventually appear. Mrs. Vandaleur puts on an air of gentle raillery, and shakes a playful finger at me.

"Ah, Mabel, dear, I hope you have forgiven my sweet child her innocent supplanting of you?"

"I have not forgiven Maud, Mrs. Vandaleur, because there was nothing to forgive. Maud was not to blame, and I'm sure things are best as they are; I should never have been a star of the fashionable world, and am better where I am."

"Well, certainly; the religious habit suits your style of face remarkably well."

"And, what is of more consequence, the life I lead suits me remarkably well."

"Well," she says, giving a little sigh, as if the interview had somehow been not quite satisfactory, "it is altogether too delightful to have seen you. I shall tell Maud and Donald what good news there is of you."

I know, perfectly well, that she will never hint, in the remotest degree, at having seen me, and that she is lying with her usual graceful ease, so I make no reply. A few minutes more, and the train has whirled Mrs. Vandaleur away; the baby-boy, with Donald's eyes, being told to "kiss his hand to the lady," and obediently complying. And I, too, presently go on my way; not rejoicing exactly, but yet with a warm thought nestling at my heart—the thought that Mrs. Forsythe remembered me at the last. Who can say with what strange keenness of intuition the eyes of the dying are gifted to discern the true from the false?

My master has found a home in a foreign land, where skilful treatment and a genial climate have restored his Lizzie to such a measure of health and strength, as he had never thought to see her enjoy.

Thus the evening of their life is sweeter and brighter than its noontide.

Nannie is their faithful attendant, and seems to have got over her fears of becoming "just a wee bit scrimpit boddie," from feeding entirely on frogs—a penalty she had expected to pay for residing in foreign parts.

The faithful creature has never quite reconciled herself to my joining the English Church, and adopting my present mode of life. The first sight of me in my close bonnet and black dress was almost too much for her, and she was obliged to hide her face with her apron at intervals, and so gain courage for another look.

Perhaps the calmness with which my master took these various changes helped to sooth Nannie's troubled mind, for she said to me, just before we parted:

"Well, my lammie, we cannot a' gang to Heaven one way; and if one gangs in one dress, and anither in anither, I reckon the Lord won't take much note as long as the heart's right wi' Him."

Once, and once only, in all these long busy years I have seen Donald, and thus it came about.

My duties chanced to take me to London for a time, and returning, late one autumn evening, from a more than usually trying day's work, I noticed a carriage standing at the open door of a house in one of those fashionable squares in the near neighbourhood of which lie the haunts of want and vice—splendour and poverty, luxury and hunger, jostling each other in a strange proximity.

Inside the lofty hall of this mansion, just where a blaze of light fell full upon her face, stood Maud, no longer girlish as of old, but still passing fair. About her shoulders was gathered, in graceful fashion, something very soft, and white, and glistening, yet not brighter than the sheen of her golden hair.

She was smiling up into his face—his —Donald's! A moment more and he ran quickly down the broad steps, to give some order to the man-servant; and, seeing my sister's dress, with that sweet courtesy, ever such a winning trait in his character, he bared his head as I passed.

With head bowed low, with fluttering heart, and failing breath, I hurried on through the long lamp-lit streets. Ah, Donald! you did not know that it was Mabel who passed you by!

Thus, then, I saw my old love, and rejoiced with exceeding great joy, to see that it was well with him; but I pray that I may never look upon his face again, for the old pain stirs at the sight of the well-remembered smile.

A life that is full of purpose can never be unhappy, and therefore mine is one of content and peace; but far away, like a picture that I once gazed upon with loving eyes that grew tear-blinded, lies the memory of the summer when Donald Forsythe loved me, and the river sang its low song of joy as we stood by the perfumed briar in the meadow—the summer long ago, when my short, sweet love-story began and ended!

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &C. &C.

BOOK III. CHAPTER II. NOTES FROM MEMORY. WIDOW AND MOTHER.

"To these terrible days, there succeeded a long time of which I need not make any record. It had a history, indeed, every day and hour of it; but one which is for my reading only, and which is written upon the living tablet of my own heart.

Should it prove advisable for me to send this present writing to Mr. Dwarris, it will be more intelligible and useful to him as a reference for the formation of his opinion and the guidance of his conduct, if it contains as little as possible about myself. I therefore refrain from transcribing in this otherwise fuller and more complete record of the memoranda which I have diligently, though briefly, kept, every observation which has reference to my own state of mind, and proceed to put in order simply those observations which refer to the occurrences, the facts, and the influences which have affected the history of our lives since the death of my husband, and the full knowledge of my own position which was conveyed to me by Mr. Meredith.

"In a short time after the interview which I have just recounted, I drew up a will, almost as short as that which John had signed on his death-bed, by which I made an exactly equal division between Ida Pemberton and my child, then unborn, and apart from any consideration of its sex, of all the property which my husband had bequeathed to me. I thought I could not go astray from what would have been his wish by doing this; and I added to the provisions of my will a request identical with that which John had made in his first will—i.e., that his brother-in-law, Mr. Dwarris, should undertake the duties of guardian to both. The document which I am now writing, and which, in the event of my death, is to reach Mr. Dwarris with the will which I have made since, and in the speedy expectation of my time of trial and danger, is written for the purpose of explaining why I have not suffered the will which I at first made to stand, and also the nature and extent of the responsibility which his acceptance of the charge, that my husband had laid upon him, must involve.

"John had no doubt that Mr. Dwarris would accept that charge, if ever it should come to be actually proposed to him, and I can therefore have no doubt either, though it must come to him, through my hands, burthened with a heavier responsibility than it ever entered John Pemberton's mind to conceive there could be attached to it.

"I now proceed to my explanation.

"I have not hitherto alluded to Ida Pemberton, my step-daughter, in connection with the revelation which I had to make to her father on his deathbed, or to the relations which subsisted between her and myself at that terrible time. It is fitting now that I should fully define the latter; and I do so, remembering that this writing may, in time to come, assume the character of a confidential communication for the guidance of Mr. Dwarris, and that in that character it imposes upon me absolute candour and reasonableness.

"Ida Pemberton was little more than a child when her father married me. She was as amiable, bright, and affectionate as she was pretty; and I had none of the ordinary difficulties, which beset a woman who really designs to do her duty in that trying relation, to encounter. She had no instinctive dislike to me, and fortunately the servants did not inspire her with a feeling which I frequently observed to have such an origin. I loved her very deeply and sincerely, for her own sake, as well as for her father's; and I deeply and sincerely love her still, though there has come between us an estrangement arising from a cause which I will set down here. It will become, after a time, necessary for me to examine closely into my right to act on that difference between us; and in such an examination I shall still have the aid of my own intimate knowledge of my husband's mind and judgment to sustain and assist me.

"I may dismiss in a few sentences the state of things between my step-daughter and myself, which existed up to the time at which our return to England was decided upon. It was a very happy one, as everything which formed a part or a constituent of my life was happy then. Ida's father was devoted to her, and indulgent to her every wish, and I was of one mind with him in this as in every other matter. Ida grew up rapidly; and I daresay it might have seemed to some people that the relation between her and me was almost of a sisterly character. Such, however, was not the case; there was in it a much graver element than that, which I carefully nourished, because of the difference in age between John and myself. It would not have appeared seemly that anything like equality should have established itself between so young a girl and myself; so that I suppose there was something incomplete in the tie between us—a weak spot which I did not suspect, and at which it subsequently broke. For it has broken, and as much of my mind as I can detach from the past must be given to the mending of it, if my life be prolonged, and, whether it be or not, to providing, to the utmost of my forethought and my power, a remedy for the evil with which I feel the poor girl's future is threatened.

"My narrative must take up the course of events at that ill-omened occurrence, which was the beginning of all the sorrow and desolation which has laid our bright and happy home in ruins; the coming into our house of Mr. Randall, who had met with an accident at our gate, and proved to be suffering from fever at the time. I recognised this gentleman as a person whom I had known, some years before, in England, and I was alone with him previous to his death, and received his last confidence and instructions.

"When he was brought into our house, another person, also a passenger by the coach, accompanied him. This person was a considerably younger man than Mr. Randall; his name was Dale; and my husband and I had reason to believe that he had in reality only a very slight acquaintance with Mr. Randall, although, after he found that his state was hopeless, he claimed to have been intimately known to him. It was not until Mr. Dale, who remained at Mount Kiera Lodge to assist in attending upon Mr. Randall, had been there two days that I saw him, and during that interval he had been a good deal with my husband and Ida. Circumstances into which I need not now enter had prevented my meeting him sooner, and when we did meet, he did not produce on my mind by any means so favourable an impression as that which he had produced upon John. I may, however, observe here, that John did not continue, even before the matters I shall enter upon hereafter had occurred, to take so favourable a view of this stranger-guest as at first. Whether he thought him presuming, or unfeeling, or felt that he had been a little incautious in permitting Mr. Dale to remain in our house because Mr. Randall was perforce obliged to remain, I do not know; perhaps he had only a vague instinctive uneasiness. But there was something in his mind which prevented his recoiling with absolute incredulity from the very hazardous suggestion which I was shortly after obliged to make to him.

"Should this writing hereafter come under Mr. Dwarris's attention, I beg him especially to dwell with exactitude upon the present portion of it. It is a portion difficult to me to write, and it involves conclusions which may be entirely mistaken, but which have such weight and circumstantiality to my mind, that I could not hold myself absolved from acting upon my intimate conviction respecting them as if they were proven.

"My husband had taken possession of Mr. Randall's keys, and had locked them up, together with the money—twenty pounds in gold, and some silver—and the papers which were in the injured man's possession; also his watch, and one or two personal ornaments of little value. The portmanteaus and bags belonging to the two travellers had been placed in the bedroom assigned to Mr. Dale. Of these arrangements I knew nothing at the time they were made, for I had unfortunately fainted on first entering the room into which the injured man was carried; but when I was told by my husband of all that occurred at that time, and of other circumstances which took place a little later, by another person to whom I shall have to make further reference—it must be borne in mind that I did not inquire into those matters until my mind was already possessed by a doubt—I took special note of two facts in reference to them.

"Firstly: Mr. Randall's keys were not placed in my husband's despatch-box in the state in which they had been in Mr. Randall's pocket. Mr. Dale let them fall on the floor in handing them to John, who locked them up, but observed at the time that the chain ring on which they were hung was unscrewed.

"Secondly: Two keys were found by another person on the study floor, on the following morning, and handed to John, who locked them up with the others in the despatch-box; and remarked to the other person that one of them looked like the key of a valise.

"These two facts are supplemented by the following circumstance, which will be found to lend them, I think, not unreasonable weight in the considerations which influence me in writing this narrative, and taking the resolution upon which I am about to act.

"It was not in my husband's study, but in Mr. Dale's bedroom, whither Mr. Randall's clothes had been carried, after they had undressed him, that Mr. Dale handed my husband the bunch of keys, after having let them fall on the floor. Before the other person, of whom I have hereafter to speak, found the two loose keys on the floor of the study, in which the sick man lay, on the next morning, Mr. Dale had been in that room, and had been left for some time alone with the patient.

"It now becomes necessary for me to relate a portion of the instructions which I received from Mr. Randall on his death-bed, and before I had seen Mr. Dale. There is no need for reference to anything which he told me of his previous history, or to any part of it known to myself in former times. He was perfectly collected in his thoughts, and aware that he was dying, when I spoke to him about any wishes he might have to express, and the disposition of such property of his as had been brought into our house. He told me the following particulars:

"That he had been on the point of returning to England, after an unsuccessful career in the colonies; and that he would have sailed from Sydney by the next ship, had he reached his destination in safety.

"That his mother was still living, in England—a note of her address will be found at the end of this narrative—and that he desired all he died possessed of to be sent to her. That the whole sum of money in his possession was three hundred and twenty pounds, of which twenty pounds would be found in his purse, and three hundred pounds in a tin colour-box, in his portmanteau. He was quite explicit upon this latter point, and I already knew that the statement about the twenty pounds in his purse was correct. Mr. Randall was not aware that we had any intention of returning to England at that time, but he begged me to take immediate charge of one article which he said I should also find in his portmanteau—it was a case containing some old letters—and to transmit it to a person whom he named, with every precaution which I could use to spare her from shock, pain, or embarrassment in the receiving of the packet. He especially enjoined me to make no announcement in the English newspapers of his death, because there were but two persons who could be affected by the intelligence, and he wished those two to learn it with more consideration. Understanding that he alluded to his mother and the person to whom he wished the packet of letters to be delivered, I made up my mind that I would be, in the case of each, the bearer of the intelligence. This intention was frustrated, as regards his mother, by the subsequent events; but I hope one day to carry it out as regards the other person whom he named. When Mr. Randall had given me these instructions, he seemed suddenly to remember Mr. Dale, and asked with much greater excitement than he had previously exhibited to see him. I went at once to summon Mr. Dale, whom I then saw for the first time. He accompanied me to Mr. Randall's bedside, and received from him a whispered communication. I did not catch all the words, but I heard enough to know that they referred to the money in Mr. Randall's possession.

"The next day Mr. Randall died, and, after his funeral, it became our duty to examine his effects, with a view to carrying out his wishes. I had made a note of the instructions he gave me, which I placed in my husband's hands. It lies before me now, and I transcribe it:

"'Three hundred sovereigns in a colour-box, among the linen in my portmanteau. Send it to my mother.'

"The valise and the bag, which formed Mr. Randall's luggage, were opened with the keys contained in my husband's despatch-box, in the presence of my husband, Mr. Dale, and myself, and the contents were apparently undisturbed; but they did not include the colour-box containing the three hundred sovereigns for which Mr. Randall had instructed me to search. I stated in Mr. Dale's presence what I expected to find in the portmanteau, and he received the intimation with an expression of incredulity.

"'Three hundred sovereigns!' he repeated. 'You astonish me, Mrs. Pemberton. Knowing poor Randall as intimately as I did'—he had varied several times, as I had ascertained from John, in his accounts of the relations between himself and Mr. Randall—'I should be surprised, indeed, to find any such sum of money among his effects. In fact, I don't believe he had it.'

"'He told me he had it, where to find it, and what he wished to have done with it,' said I.

"Mr. Dale bowed, shrugged his shoulders, directed an impertinent stare at me, and strolled across to the window. He did not turn his head towards me again. A sudden, keen suspicion shot through my mind which would appear unreasonable to anyone, I suppose, but which seemed to write itself in fire before my eyes. I said no more; the examination of the contents of the valise was concluded. I found the packet of letters, which Mr. Randall had directed me to look for, without any difficulty. Then we left the room—the valise and bag had been removed to a spare bedroom—and John locked the door. I was turning away to go to my own room, when Mr. Dale said something about his intention of leaving Mount Kiera Lodge on the following morning, and I did not make any answer beyond 'Indeed!' I then went to my room, and did not again see Mr. Dale. I sent an excuse for not appearing at dinner, and the next morning he was to leave the house.

"I explained my conduct and its motives to my husband that night. He was at first quite incredulous, and remonstrated with me upon my suspicions, urging that it was much more probable that Mr. Randall had been under the influence of a delusion when he talked of the three hundred sovereigns, than that Mr. Dale, with no means of access to the valise, even supposing him to be capable of such a deed, should have stolen his friend's money. Against this argument were the facts that I had found the packet of which Mr. Randall had spoken in the exact spot which he indicated, and that he had named correctly the sum which had been found in his purse. John was weary and depressed, and he said little. I am unable to state positively whether he ever entertained the positive conviction, that I did, of Mr. Dale's guilt in this matter.

"I record here, with the pride which I have always felt in every action of my husband's life, and every impulse of his noble heart, that he told me I should visit Mr. Randall's mother when we reached England, and, concealing from her the loss of her son's money, place in her hands the equivalent. Circumstances having since rendered this impossible, I have sent three hundred pounds directly to Mrs. Randall.

"During the short interval between Mr. Dale's departure, and the development of the fever which was destined to prove fatal to my husband, my attention was caught by an alteration in Ida, which I could not precisely define, but keenly felt. Whatever had caused it, however it had happened, she was no longer the same girl. It struck me as unnatural that she, whose happy life had been so devoid of strange events, or sad emotions, should have nothing at all to say concerning the strangers who had come, one to die in our house, the other to pass away again out of our knowledge. I might have explained this by imputing it to consideration for my shaken nerves, but that there was something in her manner, an avoidance of me, indeed, which my instinct told me had another cause. Fond and caressing as ever with her father, she was reserved and cold to me, and I particularly noticed one departure from her former habits. She did not accompany me to my room, that night, for the customary talk which had been an institution of our daily life, never interrupted until the occurrence of the accident which had brought Mr. Randall and Mr. Dale to Mount Kiera Lodge. She put this variation on the footing of consideration for me, flitting lightly away after saying 'Good night' with the excuse that she could see her father was tired, and she was sure I must be, and so she would take herself off at once. During the sleepless hours of that night I revolved Ida's altered demeanour in my mind, and again a keen suspicion awoke, associating it with Mr. Dale. I made some cautious inquiries which revealed to me that Ida had passed a great deal of time with him, while her father and I were necessarily engaged in our melancholy task. I then endeavoured to draw Ida into conversation about Mr. Dale; but I found it impossible to do so; she evaded my attempts with a skill which was the result either of the simple instinct of self-defence in an inexperienced girl, or of careful instruction on the part of a man, of whom I felt an increasing, and—considering that he had left our house, and that the fault must be our own if he ever crossed its threshold again—an unreasonable dread.

"On the following day my husband showed symptoms of illness, and I forgot everything in my anxiety for him. As much as it is necessary for me to record here of what followed has already been narrated, and I now pass on to the time when I was left alone, to bear the heavy burden of my widowhood, the care of John Pemberton's orphan daughter, and the expectation of my own child, to be born months after its father's death.

"For a few days Ida was drawn towards me by the intensity and pain of grief, which had for one so young, and so unused to it, the dreadful element of fear in it. She literally cowered, speechless, and dismayed, by my side; and I had to put a strong control upon myself, in order to support the untried young nature, which was perilously near a complete breakdown.

"With the subsidence of Ida's grief, however, I noticed the same avoidance of me which had excited my suspicions in the first instance; and, in addition to that, an attempt to get up differences of opinion between herself and me, which might seem to justify it. She took it ill that our return to England was postponed; and when I explained the cause to her, she took the information in anything but the spirit I should have expected. Never had Ida given me reason to believe, during her father's lifetime, that the demon of jealousy lurked within her breast; but it was unmistakable, under the cold civility with which she congratulated me, that there was a jealous feeling towards the unborn child which might prove my consolation, and could do her no harm, unless indeed she had been taught by a miscreant to think of it as interfering with her. I could not bear the sense that this might be so, that the girl's fine nature could have been so warped; and I told her one day what was the last expression of her father's wishes, and how he had left me the independent control of all he possessed.

"She listened to me in silence to the end, and then, after an evident struggle for calmness, she said:

"'I do not think my father ought to have left me in anyone's power.'

"'My dearest Ida,' I remonstrated, 'your father had perfect confidence in me, and neither time nor strength for any subdivided directions. He knew I should do what he would wish, and I have done. You, and your sister, or brother, as the case may be, will share your father's property between you in exactly equal proportions.'

"She said nothing, but sat for several moments with clasped hands and downcast eyes. At last she spoke:

"'And supposing I were to die, or your child were to die—what then?'

"The question disturbed me strangely, because I felt instinctively the first clause of it was merely a make-weight, a cover for the meaning of the second; and the second was incomprehensible to me as proceeding from Ida—our Ida of the dear old dead days.

"I answered her shortly:

"'In either of those cases, the whole would go to the survivor.'

"She said no more; and I, too, allowed the matter to drop; but a painful effect had been produced upon my mind by what had passed, and from that day the lives of my step-daughter and myself became more and more separate. Ida gave me no overt cause for complaint, but she did without me, and she never accepted a suggestion of mine. When it became evident that our return to England could not take place until a much later date than that which had been fixed upon by her father, I suggested to Ida that she might open a correspondence with her cousins, and thus abridge the period of waiting and strangeness; but she declined to do so. She knew nothing at all of Griffith and Audrey Dwarris, and she could very well wait until she should meet them, to make their acquaintance. I said no more, but this was not the only instance in which Ida showed a wholly unusual disregard of my wishes. I was in a state of mental and bodily suffering, which was, very likely, out of the reach of a young girl's comprehension, and I tried to be forbearing and gentle with her. I could not resist the suspicion that the change in her was in some way Mr. Dale's doing, and the time during which he had been able to exercise his influence was one of the most bitterly-regretted periods of the irrevocable past. But I counted it in with the past, and was living in the hope that the influence would die out under other, healthier conditions, and my husband's child be once more to me all she had been, when an incident occurred which scattered my hopes to the wind.

"I was standing in the verandah one morning, when Ida, mounted on her beautiful horse, Dick, came from the stables, and took her way slowly down the avenue. She had always been in the habit of riding about unattended in certain districts, and within certain limits, and she did so still. She did not see me; and, after she had passed me some distance, she drew her handkerchief from her saddle-pocket, and at the same moment quickened her horse's pace, without perceiving that something white had come out of the pocket with the handkerchief, and fluttered to the ground. In a minute more she had passed out of sight. I went slowly towards the avenue, and picked up the object which had fallen from her saddle-pocket.

"It was a sealed letter, addressed, in Ida's handwriting, to 'G. D., Post-office, Sydney.'

"I walked along the avenue, towards the gate, and presently what I expected happened. Ida came cantering up the avenue, bending in her saddle, and searching the ground with her eyes. She pulled up short when she saw me with the letter in my hand."

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BY PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER VII. AN ADVENTURE.

PHŒBE retired with a sort of uncomfortable feeling, as though she had been reproved. However, when she was alone, the image of the young gentleman waiting at the garden-gate for the girl he loved—wondering, feverish with hope and anxiety—kept rising before her. What would he think of the apparent neglect, the cruel desertion, by one whom he had travelled miles and miles to see? How harshly would he judge the innocent Adelaide—and, after his long wait, go away in a pet, perhaps never to return!

From this interesting picture, it was not far to the daring scheme which arose, ready, complete, in Phœbe's mind. Adelaide's peremptory refusal of assistance was but coquetry, and a pride which made her disdain assistance. She was now helpless, and her friends must act for her. She (Phœbe) would go in her stead—go at all risks, and without letting Adelaide know of the matter. Apart from the friendly character of the act, it would be a delightful and exciting "lark."

At eight o'clock the doors of the establishment were invariably closed, and the keys distributed among the various officers; that of the great gate being carried up solemnly and laid on Miss Cooke's table, much as the Tower gate key is placed in the hands of the officer of the watch; those of the hall and back doors being given over to the patrol for the night, constituted by Miss Emma Cooke, or by the matron, Mrs. Corbett, or one of the resident mistresses. These solemnities were time-honoured and inflexible; and it was understood that, once locked, nothing short of what was analogous to an Act of Parliament passed for the purpose could unlock them, until seven the following morning. Exit from the house by the regular mode was simply impossible; but Phœbe recollected that at the end of one of the corridors was a low window, through which it would be easy to scramble. The corridor at this time was deserted, and in comparative darkness, the gas being "down," and burning with a little blue speck. She got her hat and cloak with a little hood, making her toilet in much agitation. All was still and silent. With the sagacity of all school-boys and school-girls, she could account for the position of those in authority over her at any given moment—when they would be absent, and when they might be expected to return.

The period after night prayers—which Miss Cooke in person recited, with a bearing and unction almost ecclesiastical, having a gift, too, of extempore interpolation—was always reckoned the season for stratagems and spoils. There was then, always a sort of lull, Miss Emma Cooke and the rest of the police being engaged with their grateful tea.

Phœbe climbed lightly through the window and tripped down the walk. Once in the open air, with the dark trees over head, for the first time the danger, and even the impropriety, of the step occurred to her. What should she say? What would he say? What would he think of her? But she recalled the imprisoned Adelaide, whose future interest might be at stake. Nay, she would take up her friend's cause—praise her to the skies. Who knew her perfections so well as she did? What Adelaide could not speak for herself, she (Phœbe) could speak for her. There was something gallant and chivalrous in the idea, and it filled her little soul.

She glanced timorously at the house. There shone the light in the greater Miss Cooke's window, who was then going to bed with almost regal solemnities. She hurried to the gate. It was a clear night, and she saw through the rail the figure of a young and good-looking gentleman—who, after a glance, instantly disappeared.

There was something inexpressibly romantic, if not pleasing, in the situation. Here was a hero, a knight, a cavalier—such as she had read of in the story-book. There were the bars of the gate between—she was, as it were, in a cage; that introduced prose again. She recollected that she was shorter than her friend. No doubt he took her for one of the schoolmistresses.

After waiting a moment, and with much hesitation, she called out, softly, "Don't be afraid; I am only Adelaide's friend."

The gentleman came out of the darkness again, and stood before her. He was tall, brown-haired, and about three or four and twenty years old. The moon was just coming out, and he saw the face of the messenger as it peeped from the hood with a shy, sly expression.

"She can't come," began Phœbe, nervously; "indeed she can't! They have shut her up in prison——"

"In prison!" he repeated. "Adelaide in a prison!"

"I mean," said Phœbe, "a room, you know. But it is as bad as a prison to one of her spirit; and, what is worse, she was suffering so much at the thought of not being able to meet you, and of what you must think of her. And she was so distressed—I can assure you she was——"

"And you came to bring me the message. We are both obliged to you. And certainly the messenger she chose——"

"Oh! there was nothing in that," went on Phœbe, every now and again looking round. "We have always been such dear friends—all the school knows it. And I like her so much I would not have her disappointed in anything."

"And you did not care for this danger?" said he. "That was very courageous of you!"

"Oh! it's no matter about me," said Phœbe. "I was delighted to come, for I wanted to tell you that you must like her so much. She is worthy of anyone's love. You can have no idea what a grand, clever creature she is, and how much she suffers here. They don't treat her kindly. Meeting her in this way," added Phœbe, laying her hand on the gate, "you can't know half her merits. But I do; for I know her better than anyone in the world."

"I am sure she is everything you say. I am convinced of it, Miss—Miss—I think I ought to know the name of Adelaide's friend?"

"Phœbe," she said, demurely; "Phœbe Dawson. You have heard Adelaide speak of me, of course?"

"So Adelaide is your friend," he answered, without replying to her question. "Phœbe Dawson! what a charming name!"

Phœbe glanced back at the house—the compliment alarmed her.

"Now," she said, recollecting the purpose for which she came, and putting on her wise manner, as though she were saying, "Let us come to business"—"now, I want you to promise to like Adelaide very much. You don't know how much she deserves to be liked, nor what a treasure she will be—so wise, so clever—quite like a person that is grown up and in the world."

At this praise the gentleman remained silent.

"Her all depends on you," went on Phœbe, growing quite eloquent. "Her whole heart is set upon you; so—you must marry her as quickly as possible."

He started at this rather abrupt declaration.

"How warmly you plead the cause she has entrusted you with!"

"She knows nothing of my being here," said Phœbe; "she would be very, very angry if she did."

"So it was your own idea," he said, astonished. "You are a very spirited young lady. But, as for the marriage, that is going rather fast. There are many things to be considered before taking such a serious step. We must look about us, you know."

"Look about you!" Phœbe repeated, indignantly. "If you were really attached to her, and prepared to give up all the world for her sake, you would not speak in that way."

The young gentleman laughed. "Don't think very badly of me," he said, "but——"

"Mind this," said Phœbe, much disturbed at finding she was compromising her friend; "I have no command of language as she has, and cannot say what I want to say—oh! there goes the school-clock!" she added, suddenly becoming alarmed at the situation. "And I ought not to have come. Oh, I should not be here at all!"

"It was a most generous and loyal act on your part," said he, warmly; "and I am sure, if you had not come, I should never have returned—I should have thought it all at an end."

"I am so glad to hear that!" said Phœbe, enthusiastically. "Then you promise me to think everything good of Adelaide—which, of course, you do already, don't you?"

"As you say so, of course I do—that is, have almost convinced me."

"Almost!" said Phœbe, with a reproving air. "Now! And after all I have said! But I have not told you half what I wished."

"No," he said; "there has been no time. And I, too, have such a crowd of things to ask you. You could tell me so much about her. Perhaps you would—no, I could not venture to ask you to run such a risk again——"

"Risk! I don't care for the risk," said she gallantly, "if that be all."

"I mean, if you could finish all you have to tell me on some other occasion?"

Phœbe looked grave.

"No, no; that can't be. Next night she is to come herself; and perhaps I may come too, and keep watch."

"What a true friend you are!" he said. "I seem to know her better now, through all that you have been saying, than I ever did before."

"I am so glad!" said Phœbe. "It makes me quite happy to hear you say that. Now I must really go. Good night."

"Just one moment," he answered. "You said that Adelaide did not know of your coming to-night?"

"No," said Phœbe; "and it will be such a surprise for her when she hears it."

"Exactly," he said, slowly. "I was thinking how she would receive the news. You know she has her own ideas about these things—wishes matters to be done in her own way. She is a decided person."

"Yes, I know that," said Phœbe, thoughtfully.

"Well, now it just occurs to me that perhaps, after all, it might be better to keep this as our own little secret. Next time you shall tell me more about her; and how amazed she will be to find that we have been old friends all the time! Is it a bargain?"

Again the clock struck, which made Phœbe start, as though Miss Cooke had suddenly called to her. Without answering his question, she said, hurriedly:

"There! I must go! Good night! good night!"

"What!" he cried, "you won't?"

His hand was waving through the bars in a manner that seemed comic, or at least grotesque, to Phœbe.

After a second's irresolution, she came back and shook it, then fluttered away like a bird.

She got through the window, having rather a narrow escape of being detected; for gendarme Corbett was actually going her rounds, in list-slippers, dark lantern in hand.

As it was, a flash detected Phœbe at the open window, but luckily on the inside.

To the interrogatory, "What are you doing here, miss?" the reply was a gay laugh, and a declaration that she wanted to run away from the school, and that her clothes would be found tied up in a bundle on the grass under the window.

"This shall be reported to Miss Cooke in the morning," said the matron, more indignant at being gibed than at the culprit's offence.

"Catch me first," was the answer, and Phœbe bounded away to her room, leaving the matron much disturbed, and with a certainty that there was some prepared trick or Fieschi explosive laid, which gave her half-an-hour's trouble to search for.

There was not much sleep for Phœbe that night, for it was long before she could shut out that exciting and romantic scene. Here was a new and undiscovered element in the life of the finishing-school. The garden, a gallant young prince, the gate, and she herself playing the part of the good fairy!

The only thing that was uncertain was, how would she deal with her dear friend Adelaide? She had an instinct that the advice given by the young prince was not exactly to be followed, and something told her that a secret or mystery in such matters was scarcely proper. But had he not shown such deference, such complete loyalty, such sense, too, as a perfect man of the world, who knew much more than a little boarding-school miss like herself? Above all, how admirably he had hit off Adelaide's character. Besides, "they two, thus laying their heads together," would act more in the interest of Adelaide, who, to say the truth, was likely to injure her own interests by the rather too practical tone which she was inclined to impart into all matters, romantic or otherwise. Phœbe lay awake long, her pulses all in a flutter, thinking of this enchanter, and being a young lady not in the least familiar with such elements as "decision," or "making up one's mind," and the rest, was content to leave the matter in a delicious mist of uncertainty.

CHAPTER VIII. SHOULD SHE TELL?

In the morning, almost the first person she met was Adelaide, now released from confinement. Unprepared, and doubtful what to do, Phœbe thought that she would put off the revelation till later in the day, especially as she fancied the eyes of Adelaide were resting on her with an air of inquiry. Very eagerly she poured out her sympathy on her friend, yet felt that she was a little hypocritical. But at the next recreation, when she had time to turn the great business over, she positively would tell her the whole.

"You must have suffered dreadfully," said Phœbe. "How cruel they have been to you, and——" here she hesitated, "the dreadful disappointment too."

"Not at all," said Adelaide, bluntly, "it was part of my plan. I intend that it is to be a test for him, so that he can now have the opportunity of showing whether he can be true and constant. He is a little volatile, but I myself believe that he will stand this trial. Not for the world would I have sent him a message or excuse, and so I told you last night."

Phœbe murmured "Ye-es" in a rather faltering fashion. She was full of courage of a certain sort, and would have "faced a battery," as the phrase runs, when brought to bay; but the sort of courage that can face a mental battery—the guns of the stronger mind—she had not. She was then always inclined to temporise, to put off the evil hour.

"Ye-es," she faltered. Should she—it was no longer "tell," she felt, but "confess?"

At that moment appeared Miss Emma Cooke, to take procès-verbal of the open-window business last night, and Phœbe went with alacrity, accepting present relief from the situation at the price of future embarrassment. This was our Phœbe all over. She had the young spendthrift's eagerness to draw or renew bills. Anything that would put off the present inconvenience, were it only for a few hours, was equivalent to a full deliverance. Dismissed with a warning from the bench, delivered with uplifted finger, Phœbe then congratulated herself on having so cheaply escaped from her interview with Adelaide. When she joined the girls again, at "second recreation," she found the difficulty recur; but she felt now that it was too late, and that she should have spoken after Adelaide's speech, if at all. She was in part glad to put it aside altogether on that excuse, for the doctrine of getting it over, by going through present pain, though often preached, had always something like terror for her. Finally, a little worried by the "mess" she had got into, she said to herself that the thing would end there, and was only a bit of fun. She was before the glass as she thought this—the rather attenuated measure allowed by the establishment to the young ladies—and a roguish smile was playing over her face. Was she so sure that it would end there? He was certainly distinguished-looking and handsome, with a most bewitching expression; and oh! he had such a musical voice and power of language!

Thus it was that Phœbe was impelled to say nothing of the adventure; but she intended to act in the most delightful and satisfactory way for her friend, as soon as she had the matter well in hand. That she would thus control, and bring it to the issue, was next to a certainty, from what was perhaps not the least disagreeable element in the case, and the thought of which made Phœbe smile, toss her head, and say, "What nonsense!" an expression, in the mouth of every Phœbe, meaning the direct opposite. This was that the young gentleman would not be disinclined to submit to the influence of the friend of his Adelaide.

It was natural, therefore, that she should soon be wondering what would be the next step, and was eager that some new opportunity should offer.

A few days later Miss Emma Cooke was coming round in the capacity of general postman—a duty she fulfilled with a douanier-like severity. For she carried a penknife, with which she used to cut open each envelope on its delivery to, and in presence of, the recipient—with a view that no coin, note, cheque, or other shape of funds, should be concealed within. Such presents came rarely to Phœbe, "mamma" not being able to offer many tokens of the kind.

On this occasion there were two letters submitted to the postman's operating knife.

"That's mamma!" cried Phœbe, who, when eager and enthusiastic, uttered her thoughts aloud. "But I don't know this one; it's not Tom!" thus unconsciously illustrating the figure of "personification," on which Miss Emma Cooke often lectured. She opened it, then started, and walked away. No wonder, for Miss Emma would have required some explanation of those glowing blushes which dyed her two sensitive cheeks—a language which has but one meaning for even the most unsophisticated. As it was, Miss Emma noticed some confusion, and set it down to the account of bad pecuniary news from home.

Adelaide was standing by, not waiting for letters, which rarely came to her, but about to speak to Miss Cooke on some business. Here, perhaps, was the cause of the flush on Phœbe's cheek. She had crumpled up the letter and put it in her pocket.

"No bad news?" said her friend, now beside her.

Phœbe started, and had to look up.

"Why, what's the matter?" went on Adelaide, deliberately.

"Nothing," said Phœbe.

"Nothing!" said the other. "Your cheeks are the colour of blood!"

Phœbe was a little rebellious in temper. To "patting," or any kind of invitation, she would respond with eagerness, but not to "driving."

"You don't want to see all my letters, Adelaide," said she, mischievously, "do you?"

"No," said the other, coldly. "Only when the whole school can read the contents in your face."

"I don't care," said Phœbe, "let them, they are welcome; and you, too, if you can."

"Let all the world be welcome, by all means, only understand this—you can hide very little from the world, or from me."

A moment before Phœbe was hesitating. Adelaide, she thought, of all persons, should see this letter, for it was from the lover, but no one should dragoon her. "She was not a child"—a favourite protest of Phœbe's. She belonged to that class of the community who have to assure people what they are, and what they are not; that they are clever; that they are making money, getting on, &c.; or that they are not stupid; or, like our Phœbe, "won't be treated like a child." The genuine class make no such declarations—their actions speak for them. The world sees for itself that they are getting on, are clever, and are not children.

The letter which Phœbe, once out of sight, flew along the corridor to read in her room, was as follows:

"[Private.]

"Dear Miss Dawson,—I do hope you got back without risk. How courageous and gallant it was of you. I felt ashamed of myself, I can assure you—I, who ran no risk in the world, and was quite safe outside the bars of the gate; and to think of your devoting yourself in that way for your friend! I have been thinking over all you so admirably urged about Adelaide, and which you were urging when we were interrupted. You almost convinced me, but still I doubt. I am, as I daresay you have guessed, a rather uncertain and sceptical creature. If I give my heart, what shall I get in return? Do I really know the brilliant Adelaide after all? This is what I ask myself often. You are her friend, and know her much better than I do. There are a thousand things I would wish to be told, but who is to tell me? What you have said already, has done much to reassure me, so I must only be content with that, and trust, as Mr. Micawber says, 'that something will turn up.' At least you will be my friend.

"Forgive my being so bold as to write to you, but I know you love Adelaide, and will be interested in anyone that is interested in her. You see that I do all this openly, and without any attempt at subterfuge. I am staying at the Red Lion. May I hope for one line? Believe me, yours truly, Francis Pringle."

This last point, of being "open," had already struck Phœbe as something noble and chivalrous. It did not occur to her that the writer need have no fear of being compromised. What impressed her also was the respectful tone of his letter. It was that of a "perfect gentleman," and it removed all the scruples which had hitherto disturbed her. A number of plans and speculations went dancing through her little brain. She was eager to be at work again. She thought pleasantly she was not so simple, after all, and could be a little clever, like other people.

But what was she to do next? Things could not remain in their present state, and delay would be dangerous and embarrassing. The difficulty was Adelaide, from whom she could not keep this secret, and to whom she yet could not impart it. Now she began to feel the inconvenience of the first concealment; but the idea of going to Adelaide, and making confession of what she had done, was an act for which she had not courage. On several occasions the cold gaze of her friend had settled on her in a manner that made her uncomfortable. She determined that she would put it off until—and here her spirits came back again—the grand crisis, when she had arranged everything for dear Adelaide, far better than dear Adelaide could do it herself, and had brought the young Lochinvar to offer his hand in the most satisfactory way.

Having thus found a favourable issue, Phœbe's spirits returned; she saw the whole picture before her—the whole transaction completed—and meeting Adelaide a few minutes later, she ran up and kissed her heartily, as though to congratulate her, leaving the impression that she was in possession of some joyful news.

Before the day was over, Phœbe, who at first had "shied" timorously at the bare idea, had actually brought herself to the serious step of writing a letter directed to her correspondent at the "Red Lion Hotel." She tore up half-a-dozen attempts. She had tried to begin with "Dear Sir," "Miss Dawson presents her compliments," and she finally determined to commence abruptly, without any fashion of address or "dear."

"I received your letter. It is very pleasant to think that anything I said could have had so good an effect. I would give the world to convince you that Adelaide really loves you; and I think I could persuade you of it. I know it is not right for me to see you in that way and that manner, and Miss Cooke would not approve of my doing so; still, for Adelaide's sake, I think there could not be any harm in my seeing you once more at the garden-gate, when you must promise to listen to what I shall tell you about her. P. D."

This letter was conveyed, not without difficulty, to the letter-box, which was a short distance from the gate. Until the answer came she found herself rather shunning her friend, as she felt she could not trust herself before that interrogative glance and searching eye, which, with a question or two, would extract her whole secret from her.

In her room she often prepared herself for the interview—rehearsing, as it were. The hero was so "nice," so charmingly deferential to her, that she flattered herself she had gained a sort of influence over him already, and he could not refuse her. Yes; the poor persecuted Adelaide should have an unseen friend working secretly for her, and never know of the obligation. She was not in the least nervous, and went about among the girls in a flurry of mischief, and in the most boisterous spirits. She had made up her mind that the handsome young hero should not leave the gate till he had given his solemn promise, and even named a day, for his nuptials with her friend.

Days went by, however, and no answer came. Phœbe's lip began to curl and quiver a little at the mortification. He could not have been "amusing himself!" and her eyes flashed at the idea of such a liberty being taken with "a Dawson"—a liberty which, on a single word to Tom, would be chastised with exemplary severity. But no; it was impossible that so nice a creature could behave in such a manner.

Still no answer came from the "Red Lion." Days, and even weeks passed by, and Phœbe grew not a little anxious under the double responsibility.

PENNY BANKS.

It is a humiliating confession, but it may as well be made at once and finally disposed of, that one is getting ashamed of being a Southron. By that term I hardly include all inhabitants of this island—"other than Scotch"—but rather those inferior creatures born south of a line drawn from the Wash to the Dee. I fear that we men of Wessex, Essex, and Kent do not "amount to much." We are perhaps a pleasant and good-natured, but a sleepy and beery race withal. Our tongue shows no trace of the rough Northern burr, and instead of confounding the aspirate in the agreeable fashion common in the North, the Londoner "lets it slide" altogether. As our speech, so is our mind; there is a want of what the Yankees call "snap" about us. Let an idea be presented to us, and our native suppleness comes into play immediately. We run round it, singing a chorus. We discuss it earnestly for a while, and then make heavy fun of it. We do not carry it out. Now the Northerner says a great deal less about it than we do, but he goes to work at once. It is true that he does not understand a joke; but perhaps his whole faculties are absorbed in the practical pursuit of taking care of number one, and he has no odd corners of his mind to occupy with frivolity. Be the reason what it may, our Northern brother undoubtedly "has the best" of us in many things. Especially is this true of two great movements—Co-operation and the establishment of Penny Banks. The first of these, now a completely organised and recognised method of doing business in the North of England and in the metropolis, has met with very scant success in Wessex, and in the Eastern Counties is looked upon with no favourable eye, a feeling oddly enough shared in Scotland. It is in the great counties of York and Lancashire that the co-operative idea has spread most rapidly, as, indeed, was to be expected from its having been born where Rochdale, in Lancashire, looks pleasantly over at Todmorden, in the county of York.

As the North-country operatives were the first to show the advantages of co-operation, so was Yorkshire first in the field with penny banks, which excellent institutions were, in a fashion, led up to by preceding efforts towards making thrift popular among our working population. It was reserved for our present century to discover, that it is useless to preach thrift to people unprovided with any facilities for laying money by. The old-stocking style of saving has never been very popular with English folk, who hold it a miserly and stupid way of preparing against a rainy day. What may be called the "convivial" school of saving was very popular for a time; benefit societies, sick clubs, and other associations—which combine the acts of saving and spending, by enabling a workman to provide against sickness and accident, and enliven his existence with pipes and beer—held, and still hold, a strong grip on the English mind, despite the unsoundness of a large number of them, and the fraudulent behaviour of many of those entrusted with the savings of their fellow-men. The savings banks established about the year 1818 have, although in many cases improperly conducted, proved a great convenience to working-folk, who, as experience proves, only require the machinery of saving to be made easy, to take advantage of it. Millions of money have been invested in savings banks, despite the troublesome conditions exacted from depositors. Following them came building societies, very generally successful when properly conducted, and of immense value to the careful artisan. The writer has the pleasure of knowing some good fellows of that class—two of whom took advantage of the building societies formed in London about twenty-five years ago. Neither of these men ever earned quite a hundred pounds a year in his life; but now that they are past work, each of them owns house property to the value of twelve or thirteen hundred pounds, paying clear six per cent.; so that they are now, at least, as well off in their old age, without work, as they were in their prime with it. Following the building societies came the co-operative societies, and, lastly, the penny banks, carrying to the extreme Mr. Gladstone's idea of going "deep down." The Yorkshire Penny Savings Bank was founded in 1859, under the auspices of Mr. Edward Akroyd, M.P., to whose energy and care in conducting the infant business is due the demonstration that a bank which accepts deposits as low as a penny, can be made, under proper management, a regular commercial paying concern. This would at first appear impossible; but a glance at the figures which record the astounding development of the Yorkshire Penny Bank will dispel all illusion, so far as this part of the subject is concerned. At the end of 1859, the amount standing to the credit of depositors was two thousand nine hundred and sixty-two pounds; in 1866, this had risen to one hundred and twelve thousand five hundred and seventy-five pounds, collected from two hundred and five branches. In 1873, the bank had three hundred and ten branches, with deposits amounting, in the aggregate, to three hundred and sixty-two thousand three hundred and sixteen pounds. Since that date the deposits have increased to nearly half a million sterling. So great has been the success of the venture that, at the end of 1873, there were some seven or eight thousand pounds of surplus in hand, over and above the working expenses of the numerous branches. This must be pronounced a great triumph for the principle of "dry-money" saving, without flags, banners, or beer. While the penny bank was taking firm root in Yorkshire, the good citizens of Ghent began to teach saving to the rising generation of Belgians. About ten years ago the managers of the communal schools instituted a system of school savings banks, which in 1873 stood as follows: "In the communal infant schools of Ghent, a city of about one hundred thousand inhabitants, were three thousand and thirty-nine children, of whom one thousand nine hundred and twenty had savings-bank books, representing two thousand six hundred and fifty-one pounds. In the boys' and girls' primary schools, out of seven thousand nine hundred and eighty-nine children, seven thousand five hundred and eighty-five had savings-bank books, with ten thousand nine hundred and eighty-four pounds standing to their credit. The evening classes for men and women were attended by three thousand two hundred and eighty-five pupils, of whom two thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine were depositors, with three thousand nine hundred and seventy pounds standing to their credit." The high average presented by these figures is very encouraging to those who are anxious to extend the savings-bank system to our own schools, and again demonstrates that human beings of all ages are not indisposed to thrift, if the operation of saving be not made too difficult. Upon the importance of making penny-bank machinery work easily, it is impossible to insist too strongly. It must, also, work easily in both ways—in paying as well as in receiving; for it is now no secret, that the restrictions respecting notice of withdrawal have deterred more people from availing themselves of the advantages of the old savings banks, than have ever been attracted by those otherwise excellent institutions.

About four years ago, Mr. George C. T. Bartley determined to bring about an extension of the penny-bank system to London. This gentleman was already well known as the honorary secretary of the Provident Knowledge Society, and an apostle of thrift. Mr. Bartley began his attack by applying to the Society of Arts for aid and countenance, and succeeded in attracting the notice of that body, and also the adhesion of Lord Derby. Mr. Bartley now proceeded to deliver speeches, and to write pamphlets and tracts on thrift, experiencing no little difficulty in persuading people that the machinery already provided for saving was not amply sufficient. There were the old savings banks and the post-office savings banks; were not these all that was wanted? The answer is simple enough. Those institutions are excellent in their way, and deserving of all praise; but the very class of persons whom it is proposed to benefit, by establishing penny banks, are rebuffed from the Post Office by tedious forms and ceremonies. The amount fixed as the smallest that can be deposited at a post-office savings bank—one shilling—is altogether too high to encourage saving among the actually poor and needy. Let us look again at regulation No. 3, framed by the official mind, ignoring poor human nature altogether. "On making his first deposit, every person must give his Christian and surname, state his occupation and residence, and sign the following declaration, to be witnessed by the postmaster or by some person known to the postmaster, or by a minister or a churchwarden of the parish in which the depositor dwells, or by a justice of the peace; and if such declaration, or any part thereof, shall not be true, the depositor making the same will forfeit all right to his deposits." Supposing the intending depositor to be able to read, this rule is sufficient to frighten him away; but whether he can read or not, the Post Office has not done with him yet. He must sign, or, in the presence of a witness, affix his mark, to be attested by the witness's signature, to a portentous document, wherein he makes a solemn declaration that he is desirous, "on his own behalf," to become a depositor in the Post Office Savings Bank; and further declares that he is not, "directly or indirectly," entitled to "any deposit in or benefit from the funds of this or any other savings bank in Great Britain or Ireland; nor to any sum or sums standing in the name or names of any other person or persons in the books of the said" &c. &c.; and does also testify his consent that his deposits in the said Post Office Savings Bank shall be managed according to the regulations thereof. Supposing the wretched intending depositor not to be quite reduced to idiotcy by the attempt to find out what all this means, he is finished off by the following: "Save and except such benefits as I may be entitled to from being a member of a friendly society, legally established; or from such sum or sums as may be standing in my name as trustee, jointly with the name or names, or on behalf of any other depositor or depositors." If the reason of the depositor have survived this, he may make a deposit, and, having seen it entered in his pass-book, must sign his name, or make his mark therein. Having gone through all this trouble in getting his money into the Post Office Savings Bank, he has another grand performance to go through before he can get it out again. He must fill up a form of application and give all the particulars therein required. On the receipt of this document at the General Post Office in London, a warrant for the amount required, payable at the office named by the depositor, is sent to him by post; when, after signing receipts, and going through much stamping and checking, the depositor can recover his moneys with interest. Now, all these forms and ceremonies, though possibly useful, are by no means encouraging to persons not endowed with the faculty of reading and writing; and it was to make saving easy to these, and to the large class who cannot muster deposits of a shilling and upwards, that Mr. Bartley devoted his time and energy. At last his efforts have proved successful, and the National Penny Bank (Limited) has been established, the capital of fifteen thousand pounds having been subscribed by a number of noblemen, gentlemen, and ladies, whose names guarantee the solidity of the concern. Among the patrons, trustees, and committee—all of whom are shareholders—are the Duke of Devonshire, the Earl of Derby, Earl Fortescue, Lord Aberdare, Sir Titus Salt, Sir Joseph Whitworth, Mr. Edward Akroyd (the President of the Yorkshire Penny Bank), Mr. Thomas Brassey, and Sir Henry Cole. Eight branches are already open. To distinguish these establishments from the adjoining houses, they are painted red, a device which prevents all difficulty in finding them. The central office occupies two houses, Number 269 and 270, Oxford-street. It is pleasant, in the evening, to look in at this office and observe the amount of business done. Soon after seven o'clock, the clerks are busily employed in paying and receiving sums, varying from a single penny to several shillings, the investments not unfrequently running into actual gold. It is so easy to invest in the Penny Bank. Names or marks must, of course, be made in the bank-book, but no declarations involving reading, study, and writing are required; and for the withdrawal of small sums no notice of withdrawal is required. Men and women, girls and boys—numerous boys—drop in with their little pass-books, to pay in their pennies, their sixpences, or their splendid shillings; not on pay-day only, but on all the odd days of the week, when pence by some stroke of work are plentiful. On each and every evening they stream into the snug little office in Oxford-street, and the branches in the Edgware-road, in the East and South of London. The working-man is capricious in his savings, sometimes investing his half-crowns and larger sums; at others, depositing a modest sixpence or a tiny "threepenny-bit." Poor needlewomen—hard-worked and poorly-paid—pause on their way homewards to add a penny or two to their little store; little enough indeed, but yet a provision for the hard day when there is no work ready to be given out to them, and, but for their tiny hoard, their scanty fare would dwindle from slenderness into sad nothingness. Their little bank-books are treasured and hugged up, wrapped in paper to preserve them fresh and clean, in all care and veneration; for these tiny volumes are taken as the evidence of depositorship, and the trustees are not "responsible to persons who may lose or part with their bank-book." Occasionally, of course, these books are lost, and then—it is hardly necessary to say—the stringent rule is not practically enforced on identity being proved; but, to prevent carelessness, a shilling is charged for the new book, about the only penalty exacted by the Penny Bank. The risk of possible loss, however, falls upon the investor, the person who presents the book being considered, unless timely notice of loss be given, its owner. Boys are great, but spasmodic, depositors in the Penny Bank. They seem to like the fun amazingly; possibly regarding the possession of a bank-book as a species of brevet of manhood. It is pleasant to see the little fellows—some so small that they can hardly look over the bank-counter—bringing in their pennies and sixpences to be carried to their Lilliputian account. In the ante-Christmas period they were very busy; newsboys, errand-boys, and all sorts of boys, piling up their pennies for a grand entertainment on Boxing-day. There was, of course, a tremendous run on the bank just before holiday time, when the accumulations of weeks, sometimes amounting to "three half-crowns"—were drawn out in the lump, and the happy owners marched off, feeling that they could command destiny for three days at least. Many closed their account at that festive period, but, curiously enough, the accounts were speedily re-opened after the holiday. A "little bit extra" was being got out of pantomimes, and heavy investments, amounting at times to as much as a shilling, were made, showing that the gospel of thrift has a great deal in it, and that the habit of putting by, once acquired, is not easily thrown aside. This is one of the reasons adduced by Mr. Bartley for introducing savings banks into schools. It is not sought to divert money given to school-children for tops and toffee from its legitimate channel, but to teach the children that a little care and self-denial, exercised for a few short weeks or months, will put them in possession of articles previously looked upon as unattainable. Among the little fellows who are depositors in the Penny Bank, are many who invest a trifle almost every day, drawing out from time to time, but quickly falling back into their saving habit. When the amount of one sovereign is amassed, interest is allowed at the rate of three per cent. per annum; and, for those of ambitious views, facilities are offered for permanent investments in Consols. At the rate of the day—between fifteen and sixteen shillings—an actual share in Consols may be purchased, and the proprietor may feel himself raised to the proud position of one who "has a stake in the country." As many as five hundred accounts have been opened at one branch-office in a week, a conclusive proof that the class for whom penny banks are instituted, are not blind to their merits; and that our poorest countrymen and women only want the way smoothed for them, to become as careful and provident as the foreigners, whose saving habits are a standing reproach to the industrious and energetic, but apparently thoughtless and reckless, Englishman.

"GIVE ME A CHANCE."

A FACT.

"Give me a chance, Jack!" Fierce and fast thundered the flowing tide,
The breaking billows flashed in foam, where the coble lay on her side.
But three bare feet from the rising wave, the mast of the sunken boat
Stood firm 'mid the terrible surge and swirl—it might keep one man afloat.

Just one, and home lay close and safe, not a shot's length from the Scar;
Just one, and already the life-boat strove, 'mid the rollers on the Bar;
Just one; and Will, clinging desperately, as men cling for life and death,
Felt his mate clutch round him as he strove, in the boiling surf beneath.

It quivered and bent, the poor frail mast; his whole brain reeled in the roar.
Were those his bairns out there on the pier? Did the wife shriek then from the shore?
"Jack, give me a chance!" death's agony from his lips the sentence wrung.
"I will; God bless thee, mate; good-bye;" and he smiled up as he clung.

Then, quietly loosed his iron hold, with never a moan or cry,
Down 'mid the tangled seaweeds, the brave man sank to die;
Stalwart, and strong, in manhood's prime, dear love and life he gave,
The simple hero, who all unsung, lies 'neath the northern wave.

Just dying—no thought of glory, no dream of an honoured name,
To ring through the coming ages, from the fiery lips of fame;
No flutter of flag, or dazzle of steel, or thrilling of trumpet blare,
Only cold grey sky, and cold grey sea, drowning and death were there.

Untaught, untrained, save to courage here, and trust in the good to come,
Only to give his friend "the chance," the fisherman faced his doom;
Such men our Yorkshire seaboard rears, such men make England's glory,
Touching to light sublime the tale that tells our Island Story!

LETTERS AND LETTER-WRITERS.

QUEENS OF ENGLAND.

When Anne Boleyn's first child was christened, with great pomp, at the Grey Friars' Church, Greenwich—Cranmer being godfather—the canopy covering the heedless infant was supported by four noblemen, and all the burly lords of the butcher's court strutted after. As soon as the name of Elizabeth was pronounced at the altar, the garter king-of-arms, say the chroniclers, "vaunted himself up," and cried, with a lusty voice: "God, of his infinite goodness, send a prosperous life and long to the high and mighty Princess Elizabeth!" Then the trumpets gave it out, and the rabble cheered till they were red in the face; for at christenings there were a good many comfits, and there was much hippocras going about, and therefore christenings were popular in those days. But none of those five hundred brave gentlemen torch-bearers, who lit the child home to the palace, knew what storms and gusts of trouble were to beat upon that fair, high brow, before her golden reign. There were to be many sorts of wind, before the spring sunshine would fall on the young queen seated on her throne.

The little lady was scarcely two years old before that stalwart Blue-Beard, her father, began to negotiate with Francis the First for her future marriage with the French king's third son, the Duke d'Angoulême; but the proposal was so hampered with disagreeable conditions, that it soon fell through. The cruel death of Anne Boleyn, in the child's third year, and the stigma of illegitimacy unjustly attached to Elizabeth, led to her neglect by the court, and the want of almost common necessities. In a letter of Lady Bryan, the governess of the princess—still preserved—that lady writes to Cromwell, begging piteously for child's clothes of all kind, and that her charge might not be required to dine and sup every day in state, as there were divers kinds of meats, fruits, and wine which it was hard to restrain her grace from. "She is," says Lady Bryan warmly, "as toward a child and as gentle of conditions as ever I knew any in my life. Jesu preserve her grace." The princess is cutting her great teeth with much pain, but if the king wishes to exhibit her in public, she, Lady Bryan, will answer for her discreet behaviour. The first appearance of the child-princess in public was at the christening of her infant brother, Edward the Sixth, where she carried the chrysom, in the arms of the Earl of Hertford; but, on her return from the chapel, she walked gravely in the procession, holding the hand of her elder sister Mary, till they came to the chamber of the dying queen, Jane Seymour.

Elizabeth was brought up a good deal in the society of Edward the Sixth, for whom she had a great affection; and, on his second birthday, the little lady (six years old) gave him a cambric shirt of her own work. Wriothesley, who visited her about this time, says that she asked after the king's welfare "with as great gravity as she had been forty years old!" She was a studious child, spending all her mornings at languages, and her spare hours in needle-work, and practising the lute and viol.

The earliest letter of Elizabeth, which is preserved, is one to Anne of Cleves, on her marriage with King Henry. She expresses her respect for the queen, and her entire obedience, as to a mother. "I am too young and feeble," she says, "to have power to do more than to felicitate you, with all my heart, in this commencement of your marriage. I hope that your majesty will have as much good will for me as I have zeal for your service." Anne of Cleves was, it is said, charmed with the child's beauty and wit, and became much attached to her. Katherine Howard, whose cousin Elizabeth was, treated the clever child with great attention; but Anne of Cleves still remained her greatest favourite.

At ten years old, when Henry was first planning her marriage with the Earl of Arran (Edward being destined for Mary Stuart), and then with the Infant of Portugal, she became the pet of Katherine Parr, her amiable father's sixth queen, and through this lady's kindness she was sent for to live at Whitehall, a place for which she long had sighed. Before Elizabeth was fourteen her father had proposed her marriage to Philip of Spain; and at fourteen Sir Thomas Seymour offered her his hand on the death of her father. In her letter in reply, she, for the first time, expresses an intention to live unmarried and to retain her liberty. Four days after the ambitious admiral married the queen dowager, Katherine Parr, to the mortification of Elizabeth and Mary. That Elizabeth's young heart was entangled by this artful old widower, who spared no wiles or lover's stratagems, there can be no doubt; but it is also certain that the princess eventually absolutely disliked him, and told him by letter that she "had neither the years nor the inclination for marriage;" that she intended to devote at least two years to mourning the king, her father; and that even when she reached the years of discretion she wished to retain her liberty.

Edward the Sixth so loved his sister that he never spoke of her but as his "dearest sister," or his "sweet sister Temperance." "She dressed plainly, so that she made," writes Dr. Aylmer, Lady Jane Grey's tutor, "the noblemen's daughters and wives ashamed to be dressed and painted like peacocks." Roger Ascham, Elizabeth's tutor, says that his mistress shone like a star among the ladies of his time. She spoke French, and Italian, and Latin perfectly, and could get on fairly in Greek. She had read with him almost the whole of Cicero and a great part of Livy; in Greek, the New Testament, the orations of Socrates, and the tragedies of Sophocles. In religious instructions she studied St. Cyprian and Melancthon. A formal and show letter of Elizabeth's to Edward the Sixth accompanying a portrait of herself, will serve to show the ornateness and pedantry of the young student princess, and the love of metaphor alluded to by Roger Ascham.

"Like as the rich man that gathereth riches to riches, and to one bag of money layeth a great store till it come to infinite, so methinks your majesty, not being sufficed with many benefits and gentlenesses showed to me afore this time, doth now increase them in asking and desiring where you may bid and command, requiring a thing not worthy the desiring for itself, but made worthy for your highness' request—my picture, I mean, in which, if the inward good mind toward your grace might as well be declared as the outward face and countenance shall be seen, I would not have tarried the commandment, but prevented it, nor have been the last to grant, but the first to offer it. For the face I grant I might well blush to offer, but the mind I shall never be ashamed to present; for though from the grace of the picture the colours may fade by time, may give by weather, may be spotted by chance; yet the other nor time with her swift wings shall overtake, nor the misty clouds with their lowerings may darken, nor chance with her slippery foot may overthrow.

"Of this, although yet the proof could not be great, because the occasion hath been but small, notwithstanding, as a dog hath a day, so may I perchance have time to declare it in deeds, where now I do write them but in words, &c. Your majesty's most humble sister, ELIZABETH."

In this youthful letter, formal and stilted as it is, the old English proverb, "Every dog must have his day," comes in like a touch of nature; and for a moment the school-girl peeps from behind the blue-stocking.

When Mary's friends had overthrown that queen of a summer hour, Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth came riding up to her palace at Somerset House with two thousand horsemen in green, armed with spears, guns, and bows. When the two sisters entered London, the tall, fine girl of twenty with the long white hands she displayed so carefully, contrasted strongly with the short faded woman, cross, sallow, and anxious, by whose side she rode. But Elizabeth's refusal to attend mass soon alarmed the bigot sister. After the Wyatt rebellion was put down, the Spanish ambassador induced Mary to send Elizabeth to the Tower; and the death of the Protestant princess was distinctly resolved on by the Spanish faction. There is no doubt that Elizabeth was in imminent danger at the time of the Wyatt conspiracy. She had corresponded with Wyatt, and exchanged love-letters with Courtenay, the Earl of Devon. One of the avowed objects of the conspirators was to unite in marriage the princess and Courtenay. She had unwisely fortified her house at Ashdridge, in Buckinghamshire. Renaud, the Spanish ambassador, had said openly at Whitehall that the queen would never be safe while Elizabeth remained alive. Lord Arundel, Lord Paget, and others of the Catholic lords were urged by Charles the Fifth to drive her to death, the emperor being afraid that Philip might marry her instead of Mary. The fair prisoner, whom Simon Renaud the wily describes as "proud, lofty, and disdainful, her countenance pale and stern," indeed, so far tasted the bitterness of death that she requested that a sword, and not an axe, might be used for her execution, and expressed a wish for a French executioner. Renaud and Gardiner urged the execution of Elizabeth before the arrival of Philip.

It was during this terrible time that Elizabeth wrote the following letter to her stony sister. It is very characteristic of the writer, and shows the high unshakable nature, and the proud innocence that defied all tests:

"If any ever did try this old saying, 'that a king's word was more than another man's,' I most humbly beseech your majesty to verify it in me, and to remember your last promise and my last demand, that I be not condemned without answer, and due proof, which it seems that I now am; for without cause proved, I am by your council from you commanded to go to the Tower, a place more wonted for a false traitor than a true subject, which, though I know I desire it not, yet in the face of all this realm it appears proved. I pray to God I may die the shamefullest death that any ever died, if I may mean any such thing; and to this present hour I protest before God (who shall judge my truth, whatsoever malice shall devise) that I never practised, counselled, nor consented to anything that might be prejudicial to your person any way, or dangerous to the state by any means. And, therefore, I humbly beseech your majesty to let me answer afore yourself, and not suffer me to trust to your councillors; yea, and that afore I go to the Tower, if it be possible; if not, before I be further condemned. Howbeit, I trust assuredly your highness will give me leave to do it afore I go, that thus shamefully I may not be cried out on, as I now shall be, yea, and that without cause!

"Let conscience move your highness to pardon this my boldness, which innocency procures me to do, together with hope of your natural kindness, which I trust will not see me" . . . . . .

Towards the end her generous spirit warms, and she exclaims, "Therefore, once again kneeling with humbleness of heart because I am not suffered to bow the knees of the body, I humbly crave to speak with your highness, which I would not be so bold as to desire if I knew not myself most clear as I know myself most true. And as for the traitor Wyatt, he might, peradventure, write me a letter; but on my faith I never received any from him. And as for the copy of the (intercepted) letter of the French king, I pray God confound me eternally if ever I sent him word, message, token, or letter by any means; and to this truth I will stand till my death. Your highness's most faithful subject, that hath been from the beginning and will be to my end, ELIZABETH.

"I humbly crave but only one word of answer from yourself."

To this brave, honest letter Mary never replied. During a short illness of the queen soon after, the bloodthirsty Gardiner actually sent to the Tower a warrant for Elizabeth's immediate execution; but the worthy Lieutenant Bridges, seeing no royal signature, refused to carry out the fatal order. After Wyatt, on the scaffold, had retracted all his confessions, and asserted the entire innocence of the princess, Mary grew milder, called her again "sister," replaced her portrait in the Whitehall gallery; rejected the proposal to send her to Hungary or Brussels; and eventually removed her to Woodstock under kind but sure guardianship.

Then came more proposals of suitors. Philip pressed her to marry a prince of Piedmont; but she again declared her preference for a single life; and I think we should believe her. The great Gustavus also tried to win her for his son Eric. Philip, who seems to have been rather smitten by her, is said by Camden to have thought of her for the unhappy Don Carlos. The Earl of Arundel had hopes till after her accession; and her friendship with Dudley was progressing steadily.

Elizabeth's high spirit, which sometimes passed into Amazonian violence, seems to have shown itself directly she got into the sunshine.

Immediately after her accession she quarrelled with her faithful adviser, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. She was for retaining some hot Roman Catholic lords in the Council, he for their instant dismissal. Queen Bess grew furious as he pressed the point warmly, and she cried, "God's death! villain, I will have thy head." The rash adviser replies, calmly, "You will do well, then, madam, to consider how long afterwards you will keep your own on your shoulders."

Pretty plain speaking to a queen so lion-like.

A letter which Elizabeth wrote to Philip, on his announcement of the death of his father, the Emperor Charles the Fifth, that great warrior and statesman, shows us the queen at one of her grand moments. "We ought not," she says, in true queenly language, "to mourn the Emperor Charles your father as one dead, but rather to regard him as one that who shall survive through all future ages; for, though his body may be reduced to dust, his name, which is imperishable, shall never die. I am employing myself in reading the history of his wars, and his singularly great achievements, his courage and virtue; that so, by considering the glorious memorials of the father, I may redouble the veneration and esteem in which I hold the son." A beautiful and admirably-turned compliment, and in the purest English.

Of Elizabeth's love-letters, or, rather, flirting-letters, we can give but a short specimen, but sufficient to show what fantastic flattery was used to please her vanity, and with what coin she repaid her pseudo-lover's compliments and presents. Hatton, who knew how to fool her to the top of her bent, was, on one occasion, peculiarly jealous of the rising favour of Raleigh, and in a sulk absented himself from court. Finding this produced no effect, he at last sent his friend, Sir Thomas Heneage, with a reproachful letter to the queen, accompanied by three emblematic tokens—a bodkin, a book, and a miniature water-bucket: an allusion to "Water," the queen's pet name for Raleigh, either from his instability or his love of the sea. Heneage found the grand old virago just mounting, to ride into the Great Park and kill a doe. He knelt, with doffed hat, and delivered the letter and tokens, saying that the bucket might be useful, as water would sure to be near her the moment she left the withdrawing-room. The queen took the letter, smiling and blushing, saying of Hatton, "Sure there never was such another." The bodkin she tried to push in her hair, but it would not abide there; and she gave it to an attendant. She then blushed as much as her paint would allow her; and, half angry, half pleased, expressed her confidence in Hatton's settled fidelity and fast affection, and her determination never to give him good cause to doubt her. Then followed her message to Hatton, flavoured with all the childish euphuism of the day, and showing what puerile epithets were used by Elizabeth—then a plastered-up old woman of sixty—and her obsequious swains; and "she had little inclination," she wrote, "to look on the bucket or the book; and that, if princes were like gods (as they should be), they would suffer no element so to abound as to breed confusion; and that Pecora Campi" (sheep—Hatton's royal nickname) "is so dear to me, that I have bounded my banks so sure, that no water nor floods should be able ever to overthrow them, and, for better assurance unto you, that you should fear no drowning, I have sent unto you a bird that, together with the rainbow, brought the good tidings that there should be no more destruction by water; and, further, you must remember that she is a shepherd, and so you may think how dear her sheep are unto her."

And this silly old lady actually sent Sir Christopher a dove by Mr. Killigrew, who was to bring back a true report of his health. Some time after the jealous chamberlain, still unsatisfied, sent her a jewel in the form of a "fish prison," another allusion to "Water" Raleigh. The queen accepted the joke, and again wrote: "The water and the creatures therein do content me nothing so well as you ween, my food having been ever more of flesh than fish, and my opinion steadfast that flesh is more wholesome; and, further, that if you think pecora campi be not more cared of by me, both abroad and at home, and more contenting to me than any waterish creatures, such a beast is well worthy of being put in the pound."

To conclude, adds Hatton's friend, "her looks and words having no charms of guile, but the charter of truth, I am fully persuaded you are so full of her blessed favour as may comfort your life, content your heart, and conclude you to be most happy."

But let us take Elizabeth at a wiser and more royal moment. She once asked Sir John Harrington's wife, "in merry sort," "How she kept her husband's good will and love?" "My Moll," says Sir John, "in wise and discreet manner, told her highness she had confidence in her husband's understanding and courage, well founded on her own steadfastness, not to offend or thwart, but to cherish and obey. Hereby she persuaded her husband of her own affection, and in so doing secured his." "Go to! go to! mistress," said the queen, "you are wisely bent, I find. After the same sort do I keep the good will of all my husbands—my good people; for if they did not rest assured of my special love towards them, they would not readily yield me such good obedience."

Our next letter is taken from the time of the dangerous Babington conspiracy, when six Catholic conspirators had undertaken the queen's assassination. The Queen of Scots has just been removed to Fotheringay; and Elizabeth writes to her guardian, the faithful Amias Paulet, with reproaches, that he is to deliver to her fair and inveterate enemy who had been in correspondence with the assassins. The confidential letter is written in the queen's most beautiful and legible handwriting.

"Amias, my most faithful and careful servant! God reward thee treble-fold for thy most troublesome charge so well discharged. If you knew, my Amias, how kindly, because most dutifully, my grateful heart accepts and prizes your spotless endeavours, and faultless actions, your wise orders and safe regards, performed in so dangerous and crafty a charge, it would ease your travails and rejoice your heart, in which I charge you place this most just thought, that I cannot balance in any weight of my judgment the value that I prize you at, and suppose no treasures to countervail such a faith. If I reward not such deserts, let me lack when I have most need of you; if I acknowledge not such merit, non omnibus dictum.

"Let your wicked murderess" (his prisoner, Mary Queen of Scots) "know how, with hearty sorrow, her vile deserts compel these orders; and bid her, from me, ask God forgiveness for her treacherous dealings towards the saviour of her life many a year, to the intolerable peril of my own, and yet, not contented with so many forgivenesses, must fault again so horribly, for passing woman's thought, much less a princess; instead of excusing whereof, not one can sorrow, it being so plainly confessed by the authors of my guiltless death. Let repentance take place, and let not the fiend possess her, so as her better part may not be lost, for which I pray to hands lifted up to Him that may both save and spill.

"With my most loving adieu, and prayer for thy long life, your most assured and loving sovereign, as thereby by good deserts adduced."

Elizabeth's more playful and familiar letters to her favourites are not common; but, though often spoilt by fantastic and strained similitudes, they are always affectionate and sensible. The following was written to Burleigh, when he had returned, sulking and discontented, to Theobald's:

"SIR SPIRIT,—I doubt I do nick-name you, for those of your kind (they say) have no sense (feeling). But I have lately seen an ecce signum, that if an ass kick you, you feel it too soon. I will recant you from being spirit if ever I perceive that you disdain not such a feeling. Serve God, fear the king, and be a good fellow to the rest. Let never care appear in you for such a rumour, but let them well know that you desire the righting of such wrong by making known their error, than you to be so silly a soul as to foreshow what you ought to do, or not freely deliver what you think meetest, and pass of no man so much, as not to regard her trust who putteth it in you.

"God bless you, and long may you last,
"OMNINO, E. R."

Elizabeth could write sharp letters when she liked; take, for instance, when Leicester, without leave, accepted the governorship of the Low Countries, and had threatened to make his wife's court superior to the queen's: "I'll let the upstart know," cried this amazon, "how easily the hand which exalted him can beat him down to the dust." And sitting down, she wrote her "sweet Robin," as she called Leicester, such a "wigging" as Lord Robert had not had since he was first flogged:

"How contemptuously," she writes, "you have carried yourself towards us you shall understand by this messenger, whom we send to you for that purpose. We little thought that one, whom we had raised out of the dust, and prosecuted with such singular favour above all others, would, with so great contempt, have slighted and broken our commands in a matter of so great consequence, and so highly concerning us and our honour. Whereof, though you have but small regard, contrary to what you ought by your allegiance, yet think not that we are so careless of repairing it, that we can bury so great an injury in silence and oblivion."

Of severer reproofs, the best example is the celebrated letter which this great queen wrote to Henry the Third of France, when Mary Queen of Scots was about to be tried. The language of the French ambassador had been almost menacing. The reported conspiracies against the queen's life, with which Mary was cognisant, had made Elizabeth reluctantly resolve to take her life and save her own. The language of the letter is full of regretful anger and shrewd threats:

"SIR, MY GOOD BROTHER,—The old ground, on which I have often based my letters, appears to me so changed at present, that I am compelled to alter the style, and, instead of returning thanks, to use complaints. My God! how could you be so unreasonable as to reproach the injured party, and to compass the death of an innocent one by allowing her to become the prey of a murderess? But, without reference to my rank, which is nowise inferior to your own, nor to my friendship to you, most sincere, for I have well-nigh forfeited all reputation among the princes of my own religion, by neglecting them in order to prevent disturbances in your dominions; exposed to dangers such as scarcely any prince ever was before; expecting, at least, some ostensible reasons and offers for security against the daily danger for the epilogue of this whole negotiation; you are, in spite of all this, so blinded by the words of those who I pray may not ruin you, that instead of a thousand thanks, which I had merited for such singular services, Monsieur de Bellievre has addressed language to my ears, which, in truth, I know not well how to interpret. For, that you should be angry at my saving my own life, seems to me the threat of an enemy, which, I assure you, will never put me in fear, but is the shortest way to make me dispatch the cause of so much mischief . . . I say this to you out of a true and upright heart, and implore the Creator to grant you long and happy life. ELIZABETH."

In her more playful moments Elizabeth was a kindly and sensible correspondent, taking a broad, generous view of human nature, and displaying neither pride or pedantry.

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK III. WIDOW AND MOTHER. CHAPTER III.

MRS. PEMBERTON'S ALTERNATIVE.

"'You are looking for this, are you not?' I said to the girl, who sat erect upon her horse, and looked at me with an expression in her face wholly strange to me, as I held the letter out.

"She extended her hand to take it, and answered in one word, 'Yes.'

"I withheld it for a moment, and said:

"'To whom is this letter addressed, Ida?'

"She coloured deeply, and it was with an evident effort—the kind of struggle which convinced me that she was obeying orders, that she had been tutored for an emergency—that she answered:

"'That is entirely my own affair. Please to give me my letter?'

"'You are wrong, Ida,' I said, still retaining it. 'Nothing in which you are concerned can be entirely your own affair. It must be mine also; for your own sake and your father's. Take care what you are doing, and don't, don't refuse me your confidence. You must know that this clandestine correspondence is wrong, at least uncalled for! Why should it be secret, if it is right?'

"'Please to give me my letter,' she replied, in a firm, hard voice. 'I am not accountable now to anyone for my actions, or my correspondence.' I was sorely perplexed, but the instinctive conviction that she was tutored made me cautious. There had been nothing in all my previous life to prepare me for such an emergency as this, but I felt I must not say anything to provoke a quarrel à outrance between Ida and myself—that my sole chance in this matter, in which I had only strong suspicion, and one piece of evidence to go upon, was to combat an evil influence with a good, and to work on the girl's indisputable love for her father, and loyalty to his memory.

"I handed her the letter, saying with great gravity:

"'You and I must come to an understanding, my dear. I shall expect you to come to my room on your return.'

"She unfastened a button of her habit-boddice, pushed the letter inside the gap, reined Dick backward a few steps, then turned and rode off at a quick pace, without uttering a word. I returned to the house, burthened with a new and overwhelming anxiety.

"During Ida's absence I tried to put my thoughts in order. I had hitherto made no effort to occupy them otherwise than with my abiding grief, and the memory of the past; but I was awakened, by the incident of the morning, to a sense that of that past there survived to me a heavy care, a duty of whose onerousness I had formed no previous conception. No quiet absorption in meditative sorrow could be mine, while the voice of my dead love cried to me on behalf of his child. That Ida was corresponding with Geoffrey Dale, I could not rationally entertain a doubt; and it was now of the utmost importance that I should discover, as speedily as might be, what had passed between them—during the time when I was unconscious of everything except my husband's illness and death, and the interval of torpor which had succeeded those events—to render such a correspondence possible. It was the last thing of which it would ever have occurred to me to suspect Ida; and, though in many small particulars, into which I need not enter here, I had been regretfully conscious of a change in her, and though I had had a lurking, almost undefined suspicion that she had been attracted by Mr. Dale, and resented my absolute silence about him, my worst fears had never taken such a shape as that which the letter, dropped from Ida's saddle-pocket, revealed to me.

"I lay down wearily upon my bed, my eyes fixed upon a portrait of John, which hung where my waking glance should fall upon it. There was, in the calm, strong face in the picture, some of the help and counsel the living face had always had for me; and as I looked at it I made a fresh resolution to be true to the trust which my husband had reposed in me.

"Ida seldom returned from her morning ride under two hours, and she remained away just that length of time on this occasion. When I heard the sound of her horse's feet in the avenue, I rose, and awaited her coming to my room. I felt confident she would seek me there. I was not mistaken—she came when she had changed her riding-dress; and never had I seen her look more lovely than she did, that day, in her plain garb of deep mourning, with her beautiful hair in thick curls upon her neck, her head haughtily held up, and the girlish, arch, gleeful glance changed for a steadfast expression, in which I could read that careless girlhood had passed away from her for ever. The first words she uttered shocked me indescribably. They were:

"'You wished to see me when I came in; so I have come to you, Mrs. Pemberton.'

"I knew, and she saw, that I grew quite white. Mrs. Pemberton! She called me by a form of address which had never passed her lips before—a form of address in which I heard the knell of our long and happy association, a farewell to the old relation of friends and equals, and a declaration of war between us in the new relation of authority on my part and dependence on hers.

"I put out my hand to her to draw her to my side; but she did not seem to perceive the movement, and seated herself in a chair beside one of the windows, with her head partly turned away from me. It was not sullenness that I read in that face, but again the expression of one prepared and tutored for an emergency.

"'Ida,' I said, 'I want an explanation from you. What is it that has come between you and me? Tell me what has come into your life, my dear, and changed it so entirely?'

"'Everything is changed,' she answered, 'as much for me as for you, as much for you as for me. Since papa died, nothing has been the same.'

"'Nothing could possibly be the same either to you or to me where he is not,' I said, as steadily as I could; 'but why has his death, which ought to have strengthened the old tie between us, loosened it? Do you or I cease to care for him now that we can no longer see him, Ida? Do you not mind grieving him by doing the very thing which would have grieved him most deeply while he was here?'

"'I don't know that he——' she began hastily, then checked herself, perceiving that she had mistaken my meaning.

"'You must know that he dearly prized the happiness and the unity which existed between us, and that nothing could grieve him so much as the disunion which has come. Tell me the cause of it, Ida? What have I done? I am willing to suppose, though I cannot trace it in my conduct, that the blame is mine. Explain it, dear, and it will vanish, and you may then tell me what I asked you this morning without fear.'

"Ida turned her face full upon me, and repeated my last word scornfully.

"'Fear!' she said. 'I have no fear of you. Why should I? You are nothing to me now, except what I choose to let you be.'

("'A lesson,' I repeated to myself; 'a lesson which she has been taught;' and so kept down the anger which her cruel words awoke within me.)

"'I am a great deal to you, my dear,' I said, assuming an authoritative tone perfectly strange to me. 'Your father's death has not decreased my relationship to you; quite the contrary, it has changed it from one of feeling into one of fact. I had no authority or power over you while he lived; but I have both now, by the terms of his will, and I must obey that will. So must you, Ida; and, I implore you, do not make the obedience which we owe to it a burthen to us both. I am changed as well as you, and years have gone over my head in the lapse of a few months. But I love you more instead of less, and the child I am expecting will be a closer link still between us, if you will have it so. It seems utterly impossible to me that you are you and that I am I, and that I am speaking such words to you, when I think of what was, such a short, short time ago. I don't appeal to you for myself, I don't ask you to consider me, and to refrain from making my life more miserable than it must needs be; I appeal to you for your own sake. Don't enter on the dangerous path of concealment; tell me—I am your best friend—what it is that has come into your life since your father died—I think, I fear, the germ of it was there before—that has utterly changed you towards me, and has induced you to act as you did this morning. Tell me, dearest Ida, and, believe me, you shall not find a harsh judge in me, or any want of sympathy.'

"She had grown paler and paler while I was speaking; but she had not interrupted me by a word or a gesture. Now she spoke, with considerable effort, and putting visibly a strong constraint upon herself. This, again, was Ida—our sweet, frank, outspoken Ida—in a totally new aspect. But I read the riddle correctly, while I shrank from the reading of it. There is nothing in the moral world so potent in its action, and so hopeless to contend with, as the influence over a woman of a man whom she loves, especially if that man has, or even makes out that he has, any right of appeal to her generosity.

"'It is quite as well'—such were her words—'that this explanation should take place between us. I entirely deny your right to question me. Whatever power over me my father gave you can only extend to a certain time, and he had no power to leave you my confidence and my obedience by his will. They would have been my own mother's by right; they are not yours, and I will not give them.'

"'Ida! in Heaven's name, what are you saying? Think of what we were to each other! Was there a cloud on our happiness? Did I ever do anything to hurt or harm you? You did love me for all those years. My child! what has changed you so much—so fatally? How is life to go on at all for us, if you bring this dreadful element of estrangement into it?'

"'I do not know,' she answered, slowly, 'anything about how life is to go on for either you or me; but you can do as you choose, it seems, with mine for a certain time. I don't believe, if my father had had time allowed him to think of what he was doing, he would have disposed of me, even to that extent, without telling me about it, and asking what I wished.'

"'And you, Ida, if he had had time, and had asked you, would you then, at that time, when I had no consciousness at all that anything had arisen between you and me—would you have asked him to place your interests and the care of you in other hands than mine—would you have chosen another guardian?'

"'Most certainly I should; and he would have done it.'

"'And what reason would you have assigned for making a request of your father, which would have caused him infinite pain?'

"She turned her eyes completely away from me while she made me this remarkable answer:

"'No doubt I should have found a sufficient reason to give him, though it would not have been the true one.'

"'And the true one, Ida—the cause of your sudden change of feeling and of conduct towards me—will you not tell me that now, that I may know where I stand with you, and set right whatever wrong impression your mind has received?'

"I spoke as gently and persuasively as I could, though my heart was beating with anger—not against her, poor child, but against the man whom I suspected with ever-growing cause.

"'No, Mrs. Pemberton, I will not!'

"The reply paralysed me. A dreadful sense of helplessness came over me.

"'Ida,' I said, 'I am unable to contend further with you. You are no longer the same creature. It is as though an utter stranger had suddenly arisen in your place—an enemy, with a terrible secret weapon of warfare to use against me. How I am to meet this dreadful perversity of yours I know not; but there is one thing of which I am quite certain—my duty to your father. That duty is to save and guard his child from every danger, in so far as it is possible, even without and against her own will; and, Heaven helping me, I will do that duty. You refuse to give me your confidence? You refuse to tell me with whom it is you are in secret correspondence?'

"'I refuse.'

"'Then I will tell you, poor, misguided child. Your mind has been poisoned against me by Mr. Dale, and the secret correspondence you are carrying on is with him.'

"She sat motionless, her eyes fixed on the floor, and made no reply.

"'You must feel,' I continued, 'that to find you—who, a little while ago, were so different; you, who never had a thought or feeling unshared with your father and me; you, in whose love and sympathy I wholly trusted—capable of acting as you are doing, is a dreadful blow to me. It is, perhaps, the heaviest that Fate can now inflict upon me, and it darkens the future as it embitters the present. But I do not reproach you, Ida, indeed I hardly blame you. You are very young and inexperienced, and you have fallen under the influence of a bad and unscrupulous man.'

"Now I was to behold with astonishment another phase of the transformation which had passed upon Ida, and rendered her almost unrecognisable, almost incredible. She rose deliberately, and said, not quite steadily, but very distinctly:

"'I refuse to listen to anything you have to say respecting Mr. Dale.'

"In another moment she would have walked out of the room; but I arrested her by my next words.

"'Would you have refused to listen to your father, if he had told you his opinion of Mr. Dale?'

"'My father had a good opinion of him; he liked him.' She said these words with nervousness which she could not conceal, and she glanced at me furtively, for the first time since she had entered the room.

"'Indeed he did not like him. He had not a good opinion of Mr. Dale. I suppose you have not yet discarded all faith in me; I suppose you do not yet consider me capable of telling you a deliberate falsehood; and I assure you, upon my honour, if your father had lived, he never would have received Mr. Dale into his house again, or allowed you to keep up any acquaintance with him.'

"'If that's true—and I suppose I am bound to believe it—my father was turned against him by you. I don't know why you hated him from the first moment you saw him—bad as you make him out, he has refused to tell me that, though he knows it—but you did hate him, and you turned papa against him, if he was turned.'

"'You are perfectly right in that supposition,' I replied, to her evident surprise. 'It was certain information which I gave your father, concerning Mr. Dale's conduct, that altered his first kindly impression of the stranger, for, like all his impressions, it was generous. And now, I will make a bargain with you, Ida. If you will tell me how this secret correspondence between you and Mr. Dale arose, to what extent it has gone; in short, the whole truth, I will tell you what I told your father about Mr. Dale, and leave it to yourself to say what you ought to do, for the sake of your father's memory, and for your own safety in the future.'

"I rose and approached her, but she drew back from me, though I could see that her resolution was shaken, and her curiosity was excited. If she was acting under instructions now, Mr. Dale had foreseen contingencies, and calculated chances with considerable skill. Again her eyes avoided my face, but she spoke firmly:

"'I don't want to hear; I will not listen. Nothing that you could say would make me disbelieve him; anything that you could say would only make me more sure of what he has told me.'

"'Then,' I exclaimed, in agonised conviction that there could be only one explanation of such words, 'I can but conclude that you love this man; that he had exerted the one only influence over you which can pervert a girl's whole mind, and turn it against those nearest and dearest to her, living and dead. And yet, how can this be? You have not seen him since he left the house; and he was but a few days here! It seems too dreadful to be true. Tell me—at least I have the right to know it—is it so? Has this man won your heart, poor child, before you have learned anything of life, and of human nature?'

"'You ask me,' she replied, blushing deeply, and in a voice tremulous with anger, 'what he has never asked me. Mr. Dale is a friend of mine. I trust him; and I have surely the right to choose my own friends.'

"Her answer confounded me utterly, and so far placed me at a disadvantage, that I felt I had gone too far. But who would not have been led by the girl's words to the conclusion which I had reached?

"'I am glad that I was mistaken,' I said. 'I am glad that it is not so bad as I feared; but I must tell you, Ida, that this man cannot be your friend; and that, in a certain sense, you are not free to choose your friends. You are too young for such freedom, and the proof is that you have been led into the impropriety of a clandestine correspondence. One does not address a friend by initials at a post-office!'

"She answered me in the same angry tone:

"'You are insulting me, Mrs. Pemberton. I am young and ignorant, but I know enough to be aware of that. I address Mr. Dale as I do because he has no fixed residence at present; he is moving about, and sends for his letters to the post-office. He is going to England almost immediately.'

"This was good news in one aspect of it—the near. Bad news in another aspect of it—the distant.

"'Will you tell me,' I said, leaving all else aside for the moment, 'how you got into correspondence with a person so nearly a stranger to you? On what pretext did he induce you to write to him?'

"'Mr. Dale,' she replied, 'respected and liked my dear father, and was grateful for his kindness; and he did not wish completely to lose sight of us, and he asked me to let him know when we should be going to England.'

"'But you could not have told him that?'

"'No—oh no—I could not tell him that; but I knew he would pity me when my father was dying, and it was then that I wrote to him first.'

"I understood it all, I saw it clearly now.

"'Ida,' I said, 'I will not try to prevail with you by asserting authority which you deny—that could only bring about an unbearable state of things between us; I will only appeal to you, for the sake of your father's memory and the old affection there once was between you and me, to give up this correspondence. You have been led into it innocently; but it is wrong in itself, and it may injure your future in ways which you could not now understand.'

"She had been standing, during the latter portion of our conversation, midway between me and the door. She moved a step or two in the latter direction before she spoke again.

"'Will you give it up?' I asked her once more.

"'No,' she said, 'I will not. There is no use in saying anything more to me. I know my father would have allowed me to have Mr. Dale for a friend, and that is enough for me.'

"With these words she left the room, and left me to reflections which, for the time, were simply those of hopeless bitterness, but which afterwards shaped themselves into a resolution.

"I did not see Ida again until the following day, and then we met with mutual embarrassment. I have no doubt she was trying to make out whether her resolution had conquered me in any way, and that she could not believe that my solicitude was quite disinterested. I had no notion of the nature of the poison which Mr. Dale had instilled into her mind; but its active working was plain to me. She was barely polite to me, with a fine assumption of careless indifference which would once have been impossible to Ida; and she went about her customary occupations and amusements with more demonstrative zeal than she had shown in anything since her father's death.

"Before I went to my room for the night, I made the first allusion which had passed my lips to the occurrences of the previous day, and that in a very few words. I said I had only two requests to make of her.

"The first was, that she would inform me of Mr. Dale's departure for England whenever it should take place. The second was, that if Mr. Dale should ask her to engage herself to him, she would inform me of the fact.

"She seemed excessively surprised, and, for a moment, indignant; but I said, in the driest possible manner:

"'I conclude, Ida, it would not be pleasant to you that Mr. Dale and I should meet; I am quite certain it would be very unpleasant indeed to him, and I therefore wish to avoid such a contingency. As for my second request—as you have made me understand that my wishes would weigh nothing—you cannot hesitate to tell me what I must know sooner or later.'

"'You imagine more than is the case.'

"'I hope so,' I said, and I did not urge her to any specific answer.

"And now, what can I do, in the face of such a treachery of Fate as Ida's infatuation, because that it is? The girl is perfectly sincere in her account of her feelings, she is only mistaken in their nature. Love him, in any true sense, she, of course, does not; this is only the romantic imagination of a girl, excited by an unworthy object. But I am quite powerless, save in two respects. I can ensure the influence of time and absence on the 'friendship,' as she innocently calls it, by guarding against their meeting either here or in England; and, if he does, what I can hardly doubt it is his intention to do, in keeping up this correspondence—that is, get her to engage herself to him—I will take such measures as, if I do not greatly mistake the man, will make him relinquish her promise without much difficulty. So, it may be, that the girl's dead father, by the hastily-made will which put so much power into my hands, has provided for the safety of his child in a danger which he was mercifully saved from seeing.

"Here my memoranda comes to an end. Many weeks have passed since I made the discovery I have recorded, and no alteration has taken place in the external relations between Ida and myself. I am very near to my time of trial—a time which may leave her alone in the world. The best thing I can do for Ida is to make sure, as I have now done, that the relative, trusted by my husband, and therefore trusted by me, who would in that case be her only resource, shall be in possession of the facts which are faithfully set forth here, and of the enclosed document, which will supply him with, as I believe, the only weapon which he can use with success for Ida's rescue and protection.

"MARY PEMBERTON."

END OF THE FIFTEENTH VOLUME.

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DAVY'S LOCKER.

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DAVY'S LOCKER.

CHAPTER I. INGOT-GARDENS.

IN the vicinity of the old red-brick palace at Kensington, whose beauty has so much in common with that of a pug-dog that it is derived from its ugliness, stand many modern houses, in comparison with which the ancient residence of our kings who were is insignificant indeed. These houses—characteristic objects of this modern age—are full of personality: their big carcases are all alive with meaning, and that meaning is money. Art nestles in Kensington; aristocracy modestly hides itself away amid the melancholy remains of what were once green, flower-decked, tree-shaded lanes; even royalty has somewhat of a pensioner's aspect; the old Court suburb skirts a new kingdom with a new king—his name is Money, and his royal lodgings are all over the place. He has gone to work like a king who has but to ask, or rather to demand, and have. Vistas are opened up for his delectation; narrow ways are widened; rough paths are smoothed; cunningly-devised gardens, which might be pleasaunces in the tender heart of the country, lie where only a rail divides them from the constant tread of footsteps hurrying townwards, and where their groves are never silent from the busy hum of men. When one of these great houses lies vacant—a chance which marks the difference between this new realm of money, and the old regions where houses go by descent—it is described in the auctioneers' announcements by grandiloquent phrases which leave the late Mr. George Robins nowhere. The "desirable residence," the "eligible family house," which modestly attract attention throughout the West-end district, are mere cottages when compared with the "palatial mansion," whose dimensions seemed to have been planned to meet the requirements of a tenant who comes "with a legion of cooks and an army of slaves." Architecture displays all its modern lavishness and vulgarity in the construction of these palatial residences; and their decoration is, generally speaking, an elaborate exposition of what money can do, when it has not got taste to assist it. There are exceptions, and they show their plainer faces with refreshing contrast beside the mock Moorish, the mock Gothic, the mock Greek, and the mock Swiss structures which abound on all sides.

Mr. Gilbert Wardlaw dwelt within the boundaries of the new realm of King Money. To him extended the privilege of that broad, well-laid, well-watered road, secured by sacred right from wheel of wagon, or tradesman's cart, or vulgar cab, unless such vehicle were bound for one of the palatial mansions; for him the privilege of commanding by a nod the opening and the shutting of those great bronze gates, with their heavy lamps, and their flaming board setting forth the privileges of private way, and penalties of infringement. Mr. Gilbert Wardlaw's palatial mansion was one of the exceptions: it was neither mock Moorish, mock Gothic, mock Greek, or mock Swiss—it was a grand, square, solid, well-built, well-contrived house, calculated, indeed, to take away the observer's breath by the notion of its vastness, considered as a place for a few human beings to live in, and to make him gasp again at the notion of what it must cost to fulfil that purpose therein. But there was no frippery about it—no pretence—and, inside or out, nothing of the vulgar ostentation of wealth. The approach from the broad road was planted with sombre trees and shrubs; the great hall door, double leaved, and curiously like an iron safe on a gigantic scale—a safe which might have held the savings of all Brobdingnag—was painted a dark olive green; not a flutter of red silk blind, or flaunting of gaudy tassel, caught the eye along the ranks of the wide-extending front of that grand house, which stood rooted like the firm earth itself. Crimson silk and filmy lace, nicknacks from Niphon, and curios from Cathay—all that savoured of the passing fashion of the hour—might be looked for at the back of the house, where the suite of boudoirs and morning-rooms looked out upon cultured fields and avenues of stately trees, and, past them, to the uplands of royal gardens and park not yet fallen to the dynasty of Money. No over-profusion of gilding, or parade of costly stuffs, reduced Mr. Wardlaw's palatial mansion to the level of the merely rich man's dwelling. Bronzes and marbles, Cordovan leather and old tapestry, Venetian glass and Florentine cabinet-work, Indian fabrics with never a staring colour or inharmonious design in them, were to be found among the furniture of the nobly-proportioned rooms; but nothing in the palatial residence bespoke the parvenu—not even the parvenu himself.

On Mr. Gilbert Wardlaw the possession of wealth and the habit of splendour sat easily. It was not uncommonly said of him, by persons who accepted his hospitality and criticised his surroundings with equal freedom—such is the charming impertinence of the great world—that really he might always have been a gentleman. If Mr. Gilbert Wardlaw was aware of the tone in which he and the costly entertainments, which had for two or three seasons past figured regularly among the institutions of pleasure-worship in London, were talked of, he probably would have cared little. Perhaps he never knew the power which his wealth secured to him. He prized very highly the consideration which it purchased, but the luxury with which it invested the common processes and tasks of life affected him but slightly. Everything which money could buy Gilbert Wardlaw gave his wife, also that which money could not buy—the fullest love of a heart, with dark corners in it, doubtless, but not all corrupted in the service of money-getting. His own habits were simple, and his private apartments were the plainest in the great house. These rooms were on the ground-floor, shut off from the entrance-hall by a door concealed behind the rich tapestry, which covered the walls to the height of an open gallery with balustrades of richly-carved white marble. The suite consisted of three rooms communicating with each other, and the third gave egress through a glass door upon a flight of white marble steps, which descended to a small shrubbery. Through this shrubbery there lay a narrow, hard-beaten, well-kept path, screened from view—either from the house or from the grounds—by the choice plantation. This walk was a favourite resort of Mr. Gilbert Wardlaw's, and it terminated in a small iron gate, opening into a lane, which led at a few yards' distance to the high road. This convenient arrangement had been cunningly masked by the contrivance of a clever landscape gardener, so that the appearance of expanse and seclusion was preserved.

Mr. Gilbert Wardlaw was a good-looking man of about fifty, tall, well-built, robust, fair-complexioned, gray-eyed, dark-haired, clean-shaven, unpretending, and looking like a gentleman—a man with no marked peculiarities, either in appearance or manner; talking little, boasting never; if not strongly sympathetic, pleasant enough to get on with, and affording no pretext, except, indeed, his wealth, for dislike. He was understood to be what is called a self-made man—meaning a man who is endowed with the faculty of seeing opportunities, and turning them to advantage; but, in fact, nobody knew anything about his own origin or much about the origin of his wealth, and nobody cared; that wealth was solid, and liberally shared with society. "The man himself was very well," society said; explaining its good opinion by adding: "Oh, Wardlaw's the kind of man that is in everything, you know, if it is only big enough and good enough." Having been eminently successful, Mr. Wardlaw had come to be regarded as eminently safe, and he was generally supposed to have a passion for the processes of money-making. He was not known to have any of those enormously expensive tastes by which the expenditure of great fortunes—which are not swallowed up by the claims of large landed proprietors, and the traditional obligations of high rank—are accounted for. He did not race, he did not yacht, he was no sportsman, he was no collector, and the idea of keeping a theatre as a pastime had not presented itself to his mind. He had a picture gallery indeed, but that was his wife's fancy, and he bought pictures because one set of her artist friends had told her to buy them, and sold them because another set suggested that they might be replaced with advantage. He had a fine library, and he occasionally read, but he knew nothing about editions, and took bookbinding, as he took his waistcoats, on the word of the purveyor. He had a superb stable establishment, and Mrs. Wardlaw's equipages were faultless in style, but he would not have known his own horses if he had met them detached from the carriages, and he never rode. His interest in politics was confined to the consideration of how foreign affairs and the manœuvres of home parties affected the money market; he liked chess, flowers, and good dinners in his own house, and was hospitable without being effusive. He loved money-making—the business of it he enjoyed far more than its results—and loved almost as well his pretty wife, who was twenty years younger than himself. Altogether a colourless sort of man, for one who had climbed so high up that ladder which scales the social heaven. Though they were as happy and united a couple as could have been desired, there was a marked division between Mrs. Wardlaw's side of the house and Mr. Wardlaw's. If he had no tastes in particular, she might be said to have all tastes in general; she enjoyed life, and the very large share of its good things which had fallen to her lot, with the frankest and heartiest pleasure; she had considerable beauty, high spirits, no cares, and, though neither a selfish nor a heartless woman, she was deficient in that one touch of feminine tenderness which would have made the fact that she was childless a grief sufficient to have at least shaded, if not marred, the brightness of her lot. Her fine house, her splendid dresses, her equipages, her entertainments, her troops of friends, the gaieties and the graces of a state of life which in its material aspects can have no rival, one would think were delightful to her; but, to do Mrs. Wardlaw that justice which society was perhaps disposed to withhold, she held them all cheap in comparison with the giver of them, and the domestic love which had never wavered or failed. On one side of her brain Gertrude Wardlaw did not understand her husband. She knew it, and she did not try; business matters were above her, "out of her line," she used to say, and Mr. Wardlaw hated women who knew about business. She was content to know that he was a great business man, and that her only rival in his affections was that safe and productive one which she called the office. She had no more notion how the money which she spent was made, than she had of the process by which the silk gown that she wore was evolved from the leaf of the mulberry-tree, into the chef-d'œuvre of Madame Elise. She spent the money as she wore the gown, in well-contented ignorance. Only a superficial observer could have believed that the sunshine, which was always diffused about Gertrude Wardlaw, came entirely from without—those who know that prosperity and happiness are different things, would have seen that she was profoundly happy.

In that childless household there was one person whose importance was not measured by her position; this was a young lady who had lived with Mrs. Wardlaw since her marriage. The looker-out for contrasts in human fate must be hard to satisfy who does not find a walletful every day on which he makes his chiffonnier-like journey in search of them; they are thickly scattered in everyone's path. A fair, if not a very startling specimen, was afforded by the respective destinies of the two young women, who shared with its master the vastness and the splendour of Mr. Wardlaw's palatial mansion. In their childhood and their girlhood the destinies of Gertrude Ludlow and Florence Cheyne had run smoothly side by side, tame and commonplace. But there came a day when all this changed; when one of the playmates and school friends found herself the chosen bride of a man already eminent in those annals of fame which are the chronicles of the kingdom of Money: and the other found herself a penniless orphan, with no better prospect than the hope of being able to teach others in the second-rate boarding-school where she had been taught. The girls had not met for some little time before these widely different events had severally befallen them, and, indeed, it was Gertrude Ludlow's visit to Florence's home, for the purpose of bespeaking her friend's congratulations, that made her aware of what had befallen that friend. The bride-elect came radiant and elate from brilliant scenes of pleasure to the joyful business of preparing for her great establishment in life, to find that Florence's home existed no longer, that the old house had passed into the possession of strangers, and that she must seek for Florence Cheyne at the Roehampton school.

It is such a common story. It has gone into, and will go into till the end of time, such countless editions, that it need not be dwelt on here. The former pupil, who was going to reflect such credit upon everybody, who had anything to do with bringing her up to that pitch of perfection at which she had captivated the heart of a financial Crœsus—as her former schoolmistress loved to call Mr. Wardlaw—found the former pupil who reflected no credit upon anybody, very melancholy indeed; melancholy, be it said, but not miserable, as Gertrude Ludlow felt convinced she herself would have been under similar circumstances. The sorrow of Florence was a wholesome sorrow: grief for the dead, and for the love lost out of her life, not rebellion against the privations and the necessity for exertion which had come into it. She was much cheered and delighted by the visit of her friend; hardly so surprised by it as was Miss Hatherton, the schoolmistress, for Florence had not yet learned any of that philosophy which prepares us for indifference and neglect from prosperous friends, when the wind blows the other way on ourselves. She expected no less from Gertrude Ludlow, but she did not think of more; and her surprise nearly equalled Miss Hatherton's, when the following day brought her friend again to Roehampton.

"I have settled it all with Mr. Wardlaw, my dear Flo," was Gertrude Ludlow's unembarrassed remark. "You are to come and live with us, to be what the world calls my companion, but to be in reality my best friend, as you have always been; and Mr. Wardlaw is quite sure he shall like you, after me, better than anyone in the world, so don't say anything about it, except that you will be ready to meet me at my new home when we come back from our wedding-trip, because it is all settled."

And it was all settled; so that the very few people in the world who knew anything about Florence Cheyne considered her a very fortunate young woman, and she did not dissent from their opinion. She removed with her small belongings from the Roehampton school to the great house in Ingot-gardens, in time to receive Mr. and Mrs. Wardlaw on their arrival. At the great house in Ingot-gardens she had lived ever since, the companion and friend of its mistress; and Mr. Wardlaw had carried out that intention which, it may be fairly believed, was a friendly invention on the part of his bride-elect. He really did like Florence Cheyne next best to his wife; and, perhaps, after those two no one could lay claim to so strong a feeling as positive liking on the part of the colourless and unimpressive man, whom people called inscrutable, because he was successful and taciturn.

The contrast between their destinies was none the less real, however, because Florence Cheyne shared all the external splendour, comfort, and even consideration of her friend's life, and brought to her share in that life a secret which enhanced that contrast, for she, too, had a lover and an offer of marriage, and was engaged at the very time when Gertrude Ludlow came to impart to her the prospects which were so fully realised. But the lover of Florence Cheyne had no home to offer her; might not have one, however modest, for many a long day; and their engagement was one of those uncertain and harassing affairs to which the wiseacres of this world strenuously object. It was with no intention of concealment from her friend that Florence Cheyne left this important matter unmentioned before Gertrude Ludlow's marriage; it was because she did for awhile feel the contrast very keenly; but when she had settled down in her new home, and felt that it really was home with all its comfort, enhanced by the genuine kindness of which she was the object, she began to be ashamed of herself for the smallness of the motive which had kept her silent, and she confided the facts to Mrs. Wardlaw. That kind and flourishing young woman received the confidence with outspoken pleasure. It did not the least matter that Florence's lover was not well off; Mr. Wardlaw would take his fortunes in hand, and from that time they would be as good as made. Mr. Wardlaw was sure to like him; of course in his business things were constantly turning up which could be put in the way of the young solicitor; nothing could be more providential than that particular branch of the law being the profession of Florence's lover; he must come and be introduced at once; and as for the long engagement, which even the most favourable turn of affairs must needs imply—for Mrs. Wardlaw would not hear of Florence's marrying until she could be thoroughly comfortable—though she was not more selfish than the rest of the world, she could not but rejoice in the prospect of keeping her friend beside her for some time yet. "And so," exclaimed Mrs. Wardlaw, with the easy triumphant expression familiar to her, "that is settled; and now I shall go and tell my husband all about it."

Two years had elapsed since Florence Cheyne had taken up her abode at the great house in Ingot-gardens. The arrangement was a happy one for all concerned, and though Mr. Wardlaw's interference in the affairs of Florence's betrothed had not, as yet, brought about any remarkable access of fortune for that individual, it had availed something. The young man found favour in the sight of the financial Crœsus, even to the very uncommon extent of being admitted to the private suite of rooms of whose existence the ordinary visitors, who thronged the great house and formed Mr. Wardlaw's society, were unaware, and sometimes, in the spring and summer evenings, the two paced up and down the private walk in the shrubbery—a privilege which would have been regarded with envy by many, who looked upon the vicinity of Gilbert Wardlaw as a kind of Tom Tiddler's ground. It was on such an occasion, as they walked to and fro on a fine evening in the spring, that the young man informed his powerful friend that he had come to tell him a bit of good news.

CHAPTER II. RICHARD PEVERIL'S LUCK.

If Richard Peveril had been a wise man, he would not have fallen in love, precisely at the moment when his fortunes required the careful concentration of his thoughts and attention upon their amelioration. Perhaps it would not be easy to do a sillier thing, than this same falling in love was on Richard Peveril's part. In the first place, he had no money, or, what is almost as bad, he had not enough; and, in the second place, the object of his choice was poorer than himself. Under these circumstances, no reasonable, well-regulated, well-constituted youthful mind can possibly regard Richard Peveril with favour; that sentiment he can only hope to create in the minds of the romantic, middle-aged people let us say, who married for love in the second decade of the present century, and are not sorry for it. To the romantic mind, whether it be found in such staid conjuncture or elsewhere, Richard Peveril might possibly have appealed for sympathy on a certain delightful occasion, when he had reason to think he had at last got "a lift." Now a lift was the great object of his ambition, as it generally is the object of the ambition of young men who have entered upon a profession without large means or considerable interest. The term has a great variety of miscellaneous meanings, more or less indistinct even to those who employ it. In some shape or other, however, it always means patronage; an editor, a publisher, a customer, or a client.

To Richard Peveril, "a lift" meant a client—a client above the ordinary run of persons requiring small differences settled, small grudges gratified, small interests defended, small gains secured—the little fish which come to the perseveringly-spread net of a young solicitor with nothing to boast of in the way of a connection. There had been a time in Richard Peveril's life, when things had borne a cheerful enough aspect for the young man—when he might have looked forward even to the possibility of falling in love with a girl whose face was her fortune without incurring the charge of extreme, if not criminal, folly; when, in addition to the profession for which his father had destined him, that father, a retired wine-merchant, expected to have been able to leave him comfortably off. But Mr. Peveril, who made one mistake by retiring from business while he was yet too active-minded to enjoy doing nothing at a country place, which his previous town habits rendered equally incomprehensible and distasteful to him, made a second in order to remedy the ennui of the first. He had been a sober trader, sensible, and successful. When he became a speculator his soberness and his sense forsook him; he laboured under the double disadvantage of ignorance of financial matters, and distance from the spot on which they may be least ruinously transacted. He speculated wildly, and lost extensively. Then he made mistake number three—he concealed the state of his affairs from his son, and contented himself with pressing upon the young man the necessity of adopting a profession which would teach him to be more wide-awake than his neighbours.

A very few days after his son was out of his articles Mr. Peveril died—of a complication of diseases, it was said, but more probably of that common complaint, the inability to make his accounts balance—and then his son discovered how necessary it would be for him to be more wide-awake than other people. The involved state of his father's affairs was disclosed to him, and he found himself obliged to face the world with as much confidence as a sum of money which fell somewhat short of two thousand pounds could inspire.

This brief preamble will suffice to show why "a lift" was especially desirable by Richard Peveril. Very likely the gentleman who occupied the chambers above him, and the gentleman who occupied the chambers below him, and all the gentlemen—most of them of the severely legal type—who passed up and down the common staircase of their Inn, during all the hours of the working days, would have declared that they were quite as much in want of a lift as Richard Peveril. To want and look out for lifts are things inherent in human nature. Richard Peveril looked out long and longingly before one came to him; and, in the meantime, he committed that folly which must cut him off from the compassion of the youthful modern mind—he fell in love with Florence Cheyne, and she fell in love with him, with as much mutual readiness and satisfaction as if they had had all Ingot-gardens at their back.

Florence Cheyne was a very fair excuse for this act of folly on Richard Peveril's part; and he, too, had much to recommend him to a woman's fancy. He was good-looking, manly, frank, and kindly—altogether the sort of man a girl might invest with all the charm of fancy, and yet find, when she came to contemplate him in the prosaic reality of domestic life, that quite enough of solid reality remained, to render him worthy of the truest wifely worship.

Richard Peveril worked hard, and if he had not made much money, he had acquired a high character. Perhaps he had occasionally felt a little disappointed that it did not more frequently occur to his good friend at Ingot-gardens to put things in his way, but he readily explained it by the magnitude of Mr. Wardlaw's transactions, and their important nature. He liked the house, and prized his entrée there, when the happy leisure time came, and he might seek the presence of his affianced Florence, who was not in the least spoiled by all the luxury she lived in, and who could draw delightful fancy pictures of the home that was to be their own—a home which had no features in common with that to which she was now completely accustomed. He was a happy young solicitor indeed!

A more than usually happy young solicitor was Richard Peveril on that particular spring evening, when he walked in the secluded shrubbery with his host, and talked about his stroke of luck. Mr. Wardlaw had, when he chose to exert it, the charm of a sympathetic manner; he could throw into his face and his voice just that amount of interest and attention, which a man may exhibit without affectation; and he could do this with effect when his mind was absent from the scene and the subject. He had rarely been detected in this; and the few who had found him out had kept their discovery quiet, as even incautious people are apt to keep their discoveries concerning the little ways of men who are not only enormously rich, but are supposed to have the power of making other people's fortunes by that popular impossibility—"a stroke of their pen." Richard Peveril, certainly, had not found him out; and on this particular occasion there was no room for detection, for Mr. Wardlaw was genuinely interested and unfeignedly attentive. This was all the more gratifying, because Mr. Wardlaw had not been looking well when Richard Peveril was admitted, as usual, to his private rooms, and his visitor perceived a quick expression of annoyance, belied by his cheery greeting, pass over his face.

Mr. Wardlaw's private sitting-room—it was not a study, and the grand library, which he never entered except in other people's company, was on the other side of the house—was crowded with papers, despatch-boxes, and all the paraphernalia of a man who lives for the business of money-getting; and Mr. Wardlaw was sitting among them, as much absorbed in affairs as if it were still the working-time of day, and the place were his office. Some papers lay about in disorder; others were exactly arranged in rows within reach of his hand. Mr. Wardlaw was not looking well, but he explained to Richard Peveril that he had just undertaken one or two such very big things, that he had had to work unremittingly during the past week. When the young man began to tell his story he roused himself up to interest in it, and throwing off his preoccupied manner, proposed a walk in the shrubbery. The story was a simple one. Richard Peveril had an old school friend, who had just succeeded, by his father's death, to a large property in land and a considerable sum of ready money. Mr. Levinge was a man of one idea—Africa; and he had one intimate friend—Richard Peveril. He had made his friend his "man of business," a functionary whom his worthy father would never have admitted, and was about to start for "The Interior." Here was "a lift" indeed. The estate was an eminently improvable one, and Mr. Levinge had a notion that Richard Peveril would do great things for him in the way of investment. Richard Peveril desired nothing more ardently than to justify his client's confidence; and now he appreciated at its full value the worth of Mr. Wardlaw's friendship, for where could he obtain such counsel and aid as from him?

They went into all the details fully, and Richard Peveril was deeply impressed by the lucidity and precision of Mr. Wardlaw's views. He would call upon Richard the next day, he said; and in the meantime he would consider the best means of employing the sums which Mr. Levinge had placed at Peveril's discretion. That settled, Mr. Wardlaw insisted on Peveril's dining with them—they were, for a wonder, alone that day; and when the ladies returned from their drive, Florence had a few happy, hurried minutes with her lover before she went to dress.

"This must be such a good thing, Flo," Richard said to her; "and if I am only decently capable and painstaking, I must make so much out of it for Levinge, that I really think we might—venture—very soon."

"Do you, Richard? You know best. I am not afraid of any future with you."

There was no time for more, but the betrothed pair wore unusually happy faces at the gorgeous dinner-table, and the conversation was gay, though Mr. Wardlaw took little part in it. His few observations and his frequent smiles were, however, quite à propos, and even his wife failed to perceive that his mind was absent. Mrs. Wardlaw was very full of the points and the paces of a pair of horses she had seen that day; they were the property of a rival plutocrat and near neighbour. "Such beauties," she said; "bays, with black points; only you know nothing about horses, Gilbert, and can't understand how I envy Mrs. Goldstable."

"Have you any notion of their price?"

"Yes, Spencer found it out for me: more than five hundred pounds."

"If Spencer lets Mrs. Goldstable's coachman know that you will give seven hundred for the horses, I think you will find them very much at your service."

"Oh, Gilbert, are you in earnest?"

"Certainly, my dear. You want the horses; you had better have the horses. It is very simple."

Mr. Wardlaw dismissed Richard Peveril to join the ladies, and then went to his private rooms. Richard and Florence parted that night with a mutually imparted assurance that they had never been so happy before, and that they never could have expected things to look so bright for them.

"Though I shall never be able to let you outbid Mrs. Goldstable, like Mrs. Wardlaw," said Richard; "or give a ball to the royal princes, like your neighbours here."

"And I shall never wish to do either one or the other."

Mr. Wardlaw kept his appointment with Richard Peveril for the following day with the punctuality which is the politeness of princes and millionaires, and went into the new client's affairs with businesslike alacrity. Mr. Frederick Levinge was a personage in the solicitor's office already, and the japanned boxes, with his name upon their lids, occupied a distinguished position on the box-shelves and in the safe in Peveril's private room. The Shoreham Estate, the House Property, the Bank and Railway Shares, the Mortgages, and the Miscellaneous Papers made up a goodly show. Mr. Wardlaw inquired into them all, and found fault with some of the investments, while he approved of others.

"He is rather too deep in railroads on the whole, I should say," was Mr. Wardlaw's observation, when, after they had been discussing the subject in general for some time, Richard Peveril placed a box containing papers relating to bank and railway investments on the large table at which he and Mr. Wardlaw were sitting, and slowly exhibited its contents. "Ten thousand pounds is a goodish sum for a small man like your friend to put into such uncertain securities. There's nothing to say against the True Blue Bank—safe enough, I believe, for the other ten thousand; but we shall do better for him, Peveril, much better than that. I am turning over several things in my mind, and shall be able to advise you fully in a week at farthest. Don't you find this room rather hot?"

Mr. Wardlaw put one hand to his shirt collar, as though to loosen it, and passed the other over his forehead.

"You are not well!" exclaimed Richard Peveril, as he rose quickly and set the door open.

"I am not very well; I have been overdoing it a little."

Mr. Wardlaw leant forward on the table, drew the open deed-box towards him, and supported his forehead upon its edge. He looked pale and weak.

"I will get you some wine in a minute; it is in the next room," said Richard Peveril.

Mr. Wardlaw moved his head slightly in assent, and Richard Peveril, somewhat alarmed, went quickly into the adjoining room, and returned very shortly, carrying a decanter of sherry and a wine-glass.

"Thank you, my dear fellow," said Mr. Wardlaw; "I am better now."

He raised his head and pushed away the deed-box. As he did so the lid fell. He drank a glass of wine, and remarked that he must be more careful; he had not been feeling at all like the right thing of late; which Peveril, watching his ghastly face, readily believed; but that he was all right now.

"Let me see the map you were speaking of," he continued—"the map of the Shoreham Estate. Spread it out here; but had you not better put this away first?"

Richard Peveril locked the deed-box and replaced it in the safe. Then the two pored over the map of the Shoreham Estate, and Richard Peveril pointed out to Mr. Wardlaw the improvements he was projecting, and how the sea-side wilderness was to be made to blossom like a rose with golden leaves. Mr. Wardlaw's interest in all this was vivid, and he was full of suggestions. It was agreed that Richard Peveril should take no steps with respect to any investments for Mr. Levinge, until he should have heard further from Mr. Wardlaw. The great man and his admiring friend walked down to Vere-street together, after their conference, and then Richard Peveril saw the millionaire into a Bayswater omnibus, a conveyance which he affected. As they waited at the corner, Mr. Wardlaw told Richard he had nearly forgotten a message with which Mrs. Wardlaw had charged him. It was to the effect that Richard was to dine with them on Wednesday, before the ball, which Lady Dulcimer was to give to the royal princes. It was to be a masked ball, and report said wonderful things of the splendours to be displayed on the occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Wardlaw were going to the ball, and Florence Cheyne had "composed" a costume for her friend which was declared to leave all the man-milliner Parisian devices far behind in taste and richness.

"The illuminated gardens will be worth seeing from our terrace," said Mr. Wardlaw, as he signed to the conductor of the unassuming 'bus, and left Richard Peveril thinking how pleasant it would be for Florence and himself to catch glimpses of the busy splendour of the scene, without interruption to their own far preferable happiness.

Wednesday came, and Richard Peveril duly presented himself at the mansion in Ingot-gardens. He found Florence in Mrs. Wardlaw's boudoir, and was sorry to learn from her that Mr. Wardlaw was indisposed. He had not been quite well for some days, Florence said, and had come back from the City, that afternoon, complaining of headache. He would not see a doctor; he would not take anything that was good for him; he was fretful and unmanageable, "like all men when they're ill," said Florence, who knew nothing about it. He would not, however, hear of Mrs. Wardlaw's remaining at home; she must go to the great ball—the ball which was to be an illustration and a glory for Ingot-gardens—a link between King Money and the ancient dynasty of the old red-brick palace.

"Gertrude hates going," said Florence; "she is not capable of amusing herself when there's anything wrong with him, if it be ever so trifling, but he cannot understand that. That is just where I think: fond as Mr. Wardlaw is of Gertrude, he underrates her. She enjoys all her pleasures so much and so frankly, that he thinks she is much more wrapped up in them than she really is. He does not give her anything serious to think about, and so he believes she cannot, or does not, think of anything serious."

Richard told her that Mr. Wardlaw had been rather unwell at his office a few days before. Florence looked grave.

"I suppose," she said, "there cannot be anything on his mind. He is such a prosperous man, and we are so apt to think that 'something on a man's mind' must mean money, that the mere notion is absurd; and yet it has occurred to me several times lately that he is worried and anxious. I have seen it in little things; I have noticed trifling changes in him; and, more than that, I think he has seen that I observed him, and there has been an 'on his guard' way about him. We women here know nothing; less even than most women know about the lives of their menkind. That is his way, and it suits Gertrude. It would not suit me. You haven't by any chance heard anything, Richard?"

"Heard anything? No. Of what kind?"

"I just thought he might perhaps have had some losses; nothing to signify, of course, in his great fortune; but men mind those things, I suppose, if not for the loss, for the sense of defeat; and there may be something of that kind over him. I don't think it is all bodily illness."

"I am sure you are quite mistaken, Flo! His affairs were never more prosperous. He is a byword for success; everything he touches turns to gold. He has just set two new schemes—perfectly safe ones—afloat." And then Richard Peveril told her about Mr. Wardlaw's visit to his chambers, and their plans for the reinvestment of Mr. Levinge's money. They were now joined by Mrs. Wardlaw, who had just left her husband, and was in good spirits, as he declared himself much better. After dinner, rather earlier than usual, the serious business of dressing for the ball commenced. While this solemn process was in progress, Richard Peveril strolled about on the terrace and in the flower-garden at the back of the house, and amused himself by observing the preparations at the neighbouring mansion for the magnificent event of the evening. Lady Dulcimer's house was already a blaze of light, and the trees at the back were hung with lanterns ready for illumination; the hum of anticipation was in the air; and very soon a ceaseless roll of carriage-wheels upon the broad private road made itself audible. The night was still and beautiful, full of the scents of the early summer, and the seclusion of the garden blended delightfully, to Richard Peveril's fancy, with the scenes of brilliant and lofty life hard by.

When Peveril was summoned to witness Mrs. Wardlaw's departure, he was fain to acknowledge that Florence's anticipations were thoroughly realised. Never had Gertrude Wardlaw looked so well as in the exquisitely-composed dress which she owed to the taste and invention of her friend. She was the fortunate possessor of a renowned parure of diamonds and opals, besides other sets of jewels of great value, but the only ornaments with which she was decked on this occasion were a few small stars of brilliants, which glittered very becomingly in her fair hair.

"But your diamonds and opals, Mrs. Wardlaw?" said Richard Peveril; "why have you not put them on to-night? I should have thought there would be a grand parade of all the diamonds in London on this occasion."

"Mr. Wardlaw did not wish it," she said simply. "I always consult him, you know, about my ornaments, and he forbade a grand display, as he wanted me to be très-distinguée, like the political man in the old story."

"You are going to let him have a look at you, I suppose?" said Florence.

"No," said Mrs. Wardlaw; "I bade him good-night before I went to dress. He felt inclined to sleep, and said a good night's rest would set him up completely, so we agreed that I should not disturb him."

And so Gertrude Wardlaw passed out of her splendid home, in a blaze of light, amid a crowd of servants, with her beauty at its best, her smile at its brightest, for her mind was relieved about her husband, to the carriage which was to convey her the few score yards intervening between her own house, and that which was to be the scene of splendid festivity throughout all the rest of the summer night. The pathway on either side of the private road through Ingot-gardens was thronged with a multitude, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the royal personages; and as Florence and Richard turned back from the grand entrance to which they had accompanied Mrs. Wardlaw, the notes of the National Anthem announced that the great event of the evening had taken place. The betrothed lovers repaired to the terrace whence the illuminated gardens and shrubberies at Lady Dulcimer's were bright and beautiful to behold, and after they had talked for awhile about the strange delights and wonders of the world in which the great and powerful lived, they very naturally lapsed into the more interesting consideration of that which their hopeful fancy was creating for their own future habitation.

After Richard Peveril left her, Florence remained on the terrace. The night was beautiful, and that peculiar solitude of a great house, in which orbits are so distinct that there are no chance encounters, was somehow oppressive to her; the more so for the sense of stir, and sound, and festivity close by. As she walked to and fro, thinking very happily on the present and the future, a sound in the direction of the shrub-concealed railings which divided the main terrace, lying between the back of the house and the garden, from the flight of steps which formed the means of communication between Mr. Wardlaw's private rooms and the shrubbery, caught her ear. She listened, and the sound was repeated. It was slight, but unmistakable — the falling of a bar. Florence went swiftly to the spot, stretched her hand across the top of the iron railing, and dividing the shrubs which hid the glass door from her view, perceived that one side of it was standing open. How imprudent of Mr. Wardlaw, she thought, if he has got up and gone out at this hour of the night! And she leaned forward as far as the railing would permit her, trying to look along the shrubbery walk. No one was there, so far as she could see; but the next moment another sound was heard inside the room, whose door stood open, and a man appeared on the top of the step coming from within. Florence Cheyne was too much frightened to cry out. But this man was no member of the household: he wore the nondescript dress of a working mechanic, and it was Florence's first idea that he might be one of the men employed in the preparations at Lady Dulcimer's. In the clear starlight his face and dress were plainly to be distinguished: he had red hair and a bushy red beard, he wore a soft hat, and carried a mechanic's bag, from which the handles of some common tools projected. The man stood on the door-step; the woman, within a few feet of him, held back the bushes with her extended arm, and gazed at him unsuspected, holding her breath. He raised his head, passed the cuff of his jacket-sleeve across his eyes, and uttered a deep sigh. He had descended one step of the flight when Florence stopped him with a whisper, low, but distinct: "Mr. Wardlaw, where are you going?"

The upward look, the familiar motion of the hand had betrayed him. He turned sharply, and looked about him bewildered. With both arms Florence parted the bushes, and, framed in their dark masses, her white face under the stars met his in its shameful disguise. He stepped up to the aperture, and laid his disengaged hand on her left arm.

"Hush!" he said. "Do not call! Is there anyone on that side?"

"No, I am quite alone." Then in the lowest whisper: "In Heaven's name, what does this mean?"

"I will tell you—I will trust you." He spoke with extreme haste, in the lowest tones which could make speech audible to the ear most intensely listening, and with hollow, haggard eyes fixed eagerly upon hers. The air was resounding with music from the ball-room, and sounds from the road pierced even the seclusion of the shrubbery, yet to Florence every syllable came with a terrible intensity of distinctness. "I am ruined, disgraced, and flying—flying, not for my own sake, not to save myself, but for her sake, and that there may be something in the future for her. The harm I have done to others can never be repaired; they could not punish me more heavily than I shall be punished."

Florence had no power to utter a sound, she only continued her horror-stricken gaze.

"This has come suddenly, and an enemy has done it. I have done desperate deeds, but I was driven to desperation. You could not understand it if I told you, and every second is precious. I trust my wife to you; and, mark me, Florence Cheyne, I so trust you that I know you will obey me. Wretched men like me are tracked through their wives—I must not be. Now I must go."

"Stay," she said, finding a voice at last; "for Heaven's sake, stay! Tell me what I am to do; tell me what I have to say."

"Your own heart will tell you."

"One word. Will you not return? Are we not to see you again?"

"God knows! Much will depend on you. Help her to bear it."

"Have you money?"

"I have money and her jewels here."

"In that open bag?"

"Yes; that is my safety. Good-bye."

The next instant he was walking away down the path through the shrubbery, to the well-masked private gate which gave admittance to the lane. In two minutes Florence knew he would be out on the high road, mingling with the throng which, though it was long past midnight, induced by curiosity and the fine night, lingered about the gates of Ingot-gardens.

In the early morning, when the glorious world was waking up to the beauty of day from the beauty of night, when the birds were singing in the London trees as they might have sung in Arcady, Gertrude Wardlaw came home. The flush of excitement was on her cheek, and the pleasant memories of a brilliant fête made her eyes bright. She was not in the least fatigued, and she could almost have found it in her heart to go to Florence's room and wake her, to tell her how delightfully it had all gone off; how pleased and gracious had been their royal highnesses; and how the fairest princess out of Fairyland looked that night like the fairest princess in it. But she forbore; and she was soon sleeping, as soundly as she imagined Florence to be.

If Gertrude Wardlaw had acted on her impulse, she would not have gained admittance to Miss Cheyne's room. When Florence's limbs recovered strength enough to carry her, she went to her room and locked herself in. At first there came an interval of she knew not what—shock and terror combined perhaps—which she could not analyse, but under which she suffered hopelessly. Then Florence rallied her nerves and her judgment, and looked the situation and her own task in the face. It did not take her long to decide that she would not say anything to Mrs. Wardlaw until Gertrude should inquire for her husband, when the absolute necessity for doing so would arise. Her own business, in the meantime, would be to ascertain as much of the truth as she could, and to decide on the immediate steps to be taken.

"I am ruined, disgraced, and flying!" These had been Mr. Wardlaw's words; awfully sufficient in their meaning, but leaving her in utter ignorance of the origin of the calamity. Was it to be wondered at that she asked herself whether she was dreaming; whether there was, or could be, any truth in the tremendous facts she had to contemplate? She sat in the dawning light in her beautiful room in the grand house, and saw the ghastly heap of ruin that it really was, like one who crouches by a sand-hill in a desert, cowering from a storm.

"I will write to you. I will trust you. Men are tracked through their wives; I will not be so tracked."

What did he mean by this? She could not divine further than that she should be the one to learn what had become of the fugitive; that, at least, seemed evident; and in it there was something to hold by. But the whole thing was an awful gulf of ruin—one threatening mass of darkness, traversed by red lightning-flashes of horror and woe. What had the man done? Florence was less ignorant of business matters than Mrs. Wardlaw, but she could form no notion of the nature of his misdeeds, and their consequences. Ruin was a big word, but it was sometimes lightly used, and she could not estimate its actual significance in this case; it might mean that much would remain for the deserted wife, or little. At all events, in her most agitated, despairing thoughts, Florence Cheyne's mind never went near the truth. That all the splendour and comfort, all the observance and the ease which surrounded Gertrude Wardlaw might cease to be hers, Florence did indeed fear; but that they had never rightly, in common honesty, belonged to her, her worst thoughts did not conceive. They went little farther, indeed, just now, than the outlaw who was flying from his home and the loving wife whose heart she would presently have to wring with the news—they went only so far beyond those images as the thought that things were looking so well for Richard that he might help her friend now. The turn of the mouse to aid the lion might be coming.

When the household began to stir, Florence roused herself from her trance of thought, changed her evening dress for a morning gown, and unlocked the door of her room. She was an habitually early riser, and would not be suspected of knowing anything, when the truth should be discovered, because she was up and dressed before the maids. She made inquiries for Mr. Wardlaw, and was told he had not rung his bell, and the orders were that he was not to be disturbed. Mrs. Wardlaw was still sleeping.

Florence returns to her room, but she cannot remain there; it seems, in the few minutes of her absence, to have become haunted. She wanders about the great house, restless and unspeakably miserable, until the morning is advanced, and she has no excuse for avoiding the breakfast which she cannot eat, but has to sit down to in solitary state, her heart dying within her at every sound. The morning's letters are brought in and distributed as usual. Mrs. Wardlaw's maid appears to take those for her mistress, who is, however, not yet awake. Just then a telegraph-boy rushes up the door-steps, and his peremptory summons sounds through the house: "A message for Mr. Wardlaw!"

Florence, who is leaving the dining-room at the moment, sees the man take the telegram from the boy's hand, and immediately cross the hall in the direction of Mr. Wardlaw's private rooms.

"Stay," she interposes. "I understood that Mr. Wardlaw was not to be disturbed?"

"Always for a telegram, ma'am," is the man's answer.

"Oh, very well," says Florence, "go on then;" and she goes back into the dining-room and stands against the wall with her hands before her face, waiting, with every pulse in her body beating, and a rushing like the sea in her ears, for the announcement which must come in another minute. In another minute it comes. The man returns with the telegram in his hand, and calls to the hall porter, "Mr. Wardlaw is not there."

"Not there?"

At the words Florence appears in the hall and echoes them. "Not there! What do you mean?"

"I mean, ma'am," says the man, "that there is no one in Mr. Wardlaw's rooms."

"I suppose he has got up and gone out then," says Florence, conscious that her face belies the calmness of her words.

"I suppose so, ma'am; but it seems odd, for Mr. Phillips has not been to him this morning."

"Send Mr. Phillips to me."

Mr. Phillips comes—the very perfection of a gentleman's gentleman—and receives Miss Cheyne's instructions to see whether his master has gone out, as there is a message for him.

He returns and corroborates the story of the footman. "Mr. Wardlaw is not in his rooms, and the glass door is open."

"You had better take the message, and see if he is in the shrubbery," says Florence.

This is done, but with no result; and when, on the man's returning for the second time to tell her so, and adding "It is very odd; Mr. Wardlaw has not dressed himself in his morning clothes or in the clothes which he took off last night, for both suits are in his dressing-room," she feels that the time has come for the fulfilment of her task. She turns abruptly away, saying, "I will take this message to Mrs. Wardlaw. I suppose it ought to be seen to?" and goes upstairs.

As she crosses the gallery, on the first landing, she notices that the group of servants in the hall has been augmented by two, and that they are whispering together. Steadying herself for a moment with her hand upon her heart, as she stands outside the door of Mrs. Wardlaw's room, Florence summons up all her courage, turns the handle, pushes aside the blue satin portière, and enters the apartment, which combines, perhaps, more strikingly than any other in the house, taste and magnificence. Mrs. Wardlaw has not risen, and, lying back upon her pillows, is glancing through some half-dozen notes, and dropping them on the coverlet of blue satin and lace.

"Oh, Florence," she says, "I am so glad you have come; I was just going to send for you. It was such a lovely ball; but, tell me, has Phillips seen Mr. Wardlaw—is he all right this morning?"

"Phillips has not seen him," is Florence's reply; "he was not to be disturbed until he rang his bell. Are you going to get up immediately?"

"Not just yet," says Mrs. Wardlaw. "Come and sit with me while I tell you all about it. But, Florence, how ill you look! Is anything the matter?"

"No, dear; there is nothing wrong with me. It is only the light;" but she takes Mrs. Wardlaw's hand, and glances expressively towards the maid.

"Never mind my things just now, Meadows; I shall not get up yet."

Meadows leaves the room.

"Quick! quick! Florence," says Mrs. Wardlaw, "tell me what it is."

Florence Cheyne kneels down beside her friend's bed, encircles her with her arms, and tells her.

* * * * *

Though the door of Mrs. Wardlaw's room remained shut, and no sound of the voices of the two women within reached any ears, the truth—that is to say, an outline of it—that the master of that large, well-disciplined, smooth-rolling, unexceptionable establishment had fled, none knew whither, but everybody guessed why, speedily became known to Mr. Wardlaw's household. If his own words, "I am ruined, disgraced, and flying," had been written up over his own hall-door, those facts could not have been more thoroughly understood. What had he done? Florence Cheyne's question was the question incessantly and vainly debated by all those who, a few hours previously, held him to be as much an institution as the big parish church, or the old red-brick palace itself. They whispered together in corners downstairs, and wondered eagerly when the news would come from the office.

The hours passed on, and nothing was changed in the external aspect of the great house. Meals were served, no one appeared at them, and they were removed; carriages rolled up to the door, cards were left, letters were delivered, everything went on just as usual, but Mrs. Wardlaw did not appear, and Miss Cheyne never left her room. At five o'clock, a Victoria, drawn by the pair of bays which Mrs. Wardlaw had found no difficulty in conjuring out of Mrs. Goldstable's possession into her own, drew up at the door. There were no orders, and the carriage waited. At this point Meadows ventured to interpose; but, on asking to be admitted to her mistress's room, she was met by Miss Cheyne, who told her Mrs. Wardlaw could not see her yet.

"A great misfortune has happened," said Florence gravely; "you will all soon know what it is. At present, Mrs. Wardlaw must be alone."

Even while she was speaking the crash came, and there was an end for the unhappy wife of the man who was ruined, disgraced, and flying, of the solitary endurance of her misery, fenced round by gentle words and sweet consideration. Infinitely precious had those few hours been, for with that terrible revelation had come counsel, confidence, and mutual support. They were over now. Messengers from the office had come; the truth was known; the bubble had burst. Mr. Wardlaw's name was in every mouth as an insolvent absconder, a dishonest speculator, with the ruin of hundreds at his door; the storm was let loose to rage wildly round the unprotected head of his wife, and she must rise and confront it.

What had been the story of those hours? How had she borne it? This is the most foolish question of the many foolish questions which we ask about one another. She had borne it as one must bear the inevitable; as one must bear a great horror, a revelation far from the uttermost grasp of the imagination of evil, which strike the real and the actual out of our grasp, and replace them by thronging phantoms of hideous shape and threatening meaning.

When Florence Cheyne was asked that question she could never answer it. Gertrude Wardlaw was not stunned, and she did not lose her senses; but that she underwent every gradation of suffering, between frantic desperation and stony apathy, Florence might have testified. "What had he done?" his wife too asked; and she was the only one of all those who did ask who was incapable of forming even a guess in answer. The question tortured her, so absolutely ignorant was she; but she knew there was worse torture in store for her, when she should be told what it was he had done.

Where was he? Ah, who should tell her that! His very words to Florence, faithfully repeated, contained the most dreadful revelation of all, and the most horrible threat to the mind of his wife. "Men had been tracked through their wives; he would not be so tracked." What did Florence think these words meant? Then Florence, with infinite compassion, told her what she held to be their significance—that men hiding from justice, and successfully baffling its spies up to a certain point, but being unable to resist the temptation of letting their wives know of their whereabouts, have most frequently been detected through the incautious tenderness which prompts those wives to communicate with them. This was clearly his meaning, and he would not tell her where he was! How long might she ask the question in vain? Was it ever to have an answer? To this point she returned again and again, as her mind ranged through the endless avenues of which care, and misery, and shame, and mortification, and loss were advancing, a whole army strong, to meet her, to throw themselves upon her, and rend her body and soul. Oh, if he had only been with her! if he had only faced it!—all would have been well: all, at least, would have been bearable, for whatever had come to him should have come to her too.

Florence opposed her there. It would not have been better, she said. She had little doubt from his words to her that the only alternative of flight would have been the lot of a felon. It was a long time before she could make Mrs. Wardlaw take in this conviction, so necessary to her future safety and present line of action. Any accident or misfortune, any complication of accidents, brought about by any depth or degree of error in judgment, of credulity, of miscalculation, of even wild imprudence, on her husband's part, she was ready to accept—but crime, no! She revolted wildly, as a horse will rear at the smell of blood, from this horrid truth, which, nevertheless, Florence was obliged to press upon her; and when the arrow of conviction had pierced her heart and her brain alike, then Florence Cheyne's task was hard indeed. In the conviction everything was swallowed up; in the loss of her husband's honour everything was utterly lost. Soon they came to tell the stricken woman that her life was to be stripped of its external ornaments—that wealth and splendour, ease and observance, the sunshiny existence of a fair woman with a rich husband devoted to her lightest wish, was at an end for ever—and was to be replaced by what? They did not tell her that, not for many, many days, and she did not ask; but Florence Cheyne asked, and got for answer—destitution!

The story of the days succeeding Mr. Wardlaw's flight it would be needless to tell. It is an old story; it has gone through many editions. It will never be out of print while the love of money reigns in the undisciplined heart of man, and society worships false gods. The ruin, the disgrace, and the flight made what is called a great sensation. It was talked about everywhere with unbounded indignation, especially by those who would have been most likely to have gone and done likewise, had only a sufficient temptation come in their way. It was discussed with insatiable curiosity by the vast multitude who delight in the bursting-up of the great fortunes, which strike them as a kind of fabulous good luck extended to the wrong persons. It was gloated over with callous cruelty by some, and mentioned with contempt by others. But everyone talked of it, and innumerable stories were current as to what had become of Gilbert Wardlaw; what were the methods which were being adopted to discover his whereabouts; who were the able and intelligent officers entrusted with the task; and what were the probabilities of their success.

The list of the victims of Wardlaw and Co. was portentous, and about half true. That half constituted a heavy load for a ruined, disgraced, and flying wretch to bear upon his conscience, to solitary places where his only safety would consist in being friendless and unknown. For a while people talked a good deal about his wife. What was to become of her? Had she any friends? The word had returned to its original significance since all her prosperity had come to an end, and it was no longer in use in society.

It was a bad case, a very bad case, and there was something mysterious about it, too. For some time past, it was evident when matters came to be investigated, Mr. Wardlaw had not been in a safe position—his wealth of late years had been fictitious; but this had not been always so. There had been a time when his prosperity was under-estimated, when his fortune was under-stated; when everything he touched prospered—and when he had touched nothing that was not fairly honest and legitimate. A change had come over this state of things, and of late his speculations and his schemes had been as wild and unreasonable, as they had been immoral and reckless. The story of those schemes would also be an old story always coming out in a new edition, and which will never be out of print. So let it pass. Its sequel is all that concerns us. The name which, but a few days before, had been uttered everywhere with envy and respect was a byword now—a symbol of anguish and misery in many houses, and of what in Gilbert Wardlaw's own? There were no four walls in all wide London that bore that title now. With unsparing haste the law had done its work; and when we see Florence Cheyne and Gertrude Wardlaw next, they are far from the palatial residence in Ingot-gardens.

The great house, rooted like the firm earth itself, still stands firm, and the trees cluster round it with their summer greenery upon them. At morning and at evening the song of birds is loud and sweet in the gardens and in the shrubbery; but there is no life in the splendid rooms, no sound breaks the silence of the vast bare hall. Marble and bronzes; priceless tapestries; costly furniture; nicknacks from Niphon and curios from Cathay—all the magnificent plenishing which adorned the stately house, every familiar object dear to association and full of the charm of constant use, have been scattered by the hammer of the auctioneer—saddest of destinies and most trite! They are all gone: the great house stands empty, a vast echoing tomb; and the bills, with their elaborate description of its former contents, hang in unsightly strips on the gate-posts. Mrs. Goldstable has bought back her bays, and is a considerable gainer by the transaction; and Mrs. Dibbs has secured those lovely boudoir-screens which she had long admired—that charming Persian embroidery, you know, really unique—all the upholstery people in London had tried to get her anything like them in vain.

On the first floor of a house in the Bloomsbury district, in lodgings consisting of two rooms, Gertrude Wardlaw and Florence Cheyne had found shelter. Mrs. Wardlaw had not waited to be driven from the great house in Ingot-gardens. So soon as the storm burst, when clamorous voices, angry denunciation, and vociferous demands broke in upon the first anguish of her grief, she implored Richard Peveril, who had reached Ingot-gardens very shortly after the first messengers of evil, to take her away. Ignorant of the extent of the calamity that had befallen her, and incredulous of its sweeping and irremedial nature, Richard urged upon her the wisdom of delay. To leave her home and abandon its contents was to give in utterly, but she persisted; there was no battle for her to fight, she was beaten without striking a blow. Her only wish was to surrender everything in her possession to the creditors, who must be, even when all the value represented by those possessions was realised, heavy losers by her husband's crime, and then to hide herself away with Florence until some word or token should reach her from her husband. Her greatest fear was that she might learn that he had been taken. From this terror she suffered so acutely night and day, in every waking hour, that her health broke down, and her beauty vanished under its corroding touch.

Three weeks after the ball which Lady Dulcimer gave to the royal princes, Gertrude Wardlaw would not have been recognised for the woman who was one of the fairest and brightest ornaments of that memorable scene. She rarely spoke of her husband to Florence, and beyond asking Richard Peveril every day, when he came to see her, if there was any news —which question he understood to mean, was there any news of Wardlaw?—she never made any mention of him to their constant and energetic friend.

When she had entreated him to find a shelter for her, Richard Peveril had only a very hazy notion of how to set about doing so. On what scale was this new home to be? With what amount of mercy those whom her husband had so deeply wronged would treat his innocent and unfortunate wife, was as yet unknown and very doubtful; neither was it known whether Wardlaw had made any provision to secure her, in the event of the catastrophe which, for some time at least, he must have foreseen. On this point Richard Peveril questioned her, but she answered him at once that she knew of no such provision, and, should it exist, would not accept it—everything must go towards repairing the wrong which, when all was done, would be so great and irreparable. On her own part, she begged that this might be made known, without any delay; and it was made known, while yet the full extent of Wardlaw's misdeeds had not been discovered.

Her instructions to Richard Peveril, given through Florence, were simple and straightforward: "Two rooms for us to live in, large enough to breathe in, are all I want; and, perhaps, they will leave me the plainest of my clothes, and the ready money that I had when—when it happened." This sum was about two hundred pounds.

It was late one summer's evening when Gertrude Wardlaw and Florence Cheyne left the great house in Ingot-gardens for ever. As they drove away in a cab, with their boxes on the roof, escorted by Richard Peveril, the persons left in charge of the house eyed them curiously, with some dim sense of the grim contrast of the situation, and of the terrible irony of Fate. A moment before she stepped into the cab a man approached the door-step, and, addressing Gertrude, asked whether she was Mrs. Wardlaw? Being answered in the affirmative, he handed her a large-sized letter; the square official-looking envelope was fastened by a conspicuous red seal, and Gertrude, taking the packet, looked at it with some surprise. "There is no answer," said the man as he turned away. Mrs. Wardlaw made no remark about this packet to either of her companions; it was too large to go into her pocket, so she placed it in a small travelling-bag, and sat back in the cab, veiled and silent, as they fared heavily along from the old home to the new.

And then Gertrude Wardlaw went under; nobody knew where she was, or what had become of her. The crash at the great house ceased to be a subject of popular gossip, though it continued to occupy the attention of legal and financial circles, and she continued to occupy the attention of the police. She knew, and Florence knew, and Richard Peveril knew, that she was watched unremittingly, but she was watched in vain — no line, no token, no message from her husband reached her, and her heart sickened with mingled hope deferred and fear.

Richard Peveril devoted himself with all the energy of his character to the interests and the consolation of the unfortunate lady, to whom his betrothed wife was so constant a friend. Deeply shocked and distressed as he was by the catastrophe which had overtaken the

Wardlaws, he was not so profoundly astonished as was Florence. Men of business come in the way of these things—though not, perhaps, on so gigantic a scale—too frequently to have room left for much surprise. Of his own possible loss in the matter he had neither time nor inclination to think; it was, after all, only a potential quantity—the advice that Wardlaw might have given, the influence that Wardlaw might have used—and his self-imposed task, together with his fortunately increasing business, gave him quite enough to do without disturbing himself with unprofitable speculations as to what might have been.

And Florence? Florence had lost her safe and sumptuous home, and the relations between herself and her friend were so altered, that Mrs. Wardlaw had become an object of protection and care to the girl to whom she had acted in the brilliant days, which seemed so impossibly long ago, the part of a fairy godmother. Even over this Richard Peveril did not grieve much. Before it all came about, he and Florence had made up their minds that they might "venture," as he called it, soon. This catastrophe would only induce them to venture a little sooner. In the midst of all the pain, and trouble, and confusion, and weariness of their conferences on the history of the man who was ruined, disgraced, and gone, there were gleams of comfort in the lovers' plans for a quiet marriage, so soon as they could see a little clearer into Gertrude Wardlaw's future.

The story of the terrible collapse of Wardlaw and Co. was some weeks old, when an envelope, addressed to her at Ingot-gardens, in a woman's writing, and forwarded thence to the lodgings in Bloomsbury, reached the hands of Florence Cheyne. Its contents consisted merely of a piece of card, the size of an ordinary visiting-card, perforated with four rows of holes, placed at irregular distances in three lines, and folded in a scrap of printed paper, apparently a leaf torn from a book of travel. On the envelope was written—"With Edgar Poe's compliments." The envelope was only gummed, and there was no appearance of its having been tampered with. For a moment this strange communication puzzled Florence, but then there flashed across her a recollection which indicated its meaning. Mr. Wardlaw had amused himself and her many a time with the reading of puzzles and cypher-messages, which interested her, and he had once told her that there was but one kind of communication which he believed to be undiscoverable by a third person—that in which the parties agreed upon certain words to be read through the holes in a card, those holes having been cut after a fashion previously arranged between them. He had shown her a number of experiments in cypher, and they had tried the card-system successfully. But there was no previous agreement, and she could not read the message—even if, indeed, it came from the fugitive. This was, however, so obvious that she could not suppose it to have escaped his attention, and she felt there must be some device, which he had given her credit for either quickness or perseverance enough to fathom, by which the enigma could be solved. She set herself at once to the task of trying; and it proved easier than she had expected. The torn page was one from a book of travels in Mexico, and she recognised it for the same page, though of course not torn from the same volume—that would have gone the way of all the books at Ingot-gardens—as that on which she and Mr. Wardlaw had tried the card-system. She narrowly inspected it, and caught sight of a faint pencil-mark under three words which occurred at long intervals on the page. They were—"reverse"—"order"—"number." If this message came from Philip Wardlaw, he had trusted much, almost desperately, to her memory and her quickness. In her desk were some of the results which he and she had made out together from their cypher study; she fetched them, and taxed her memory to the utmost. When she had got it all quite clear, she spread the page before her, fitted the card to it, and began to write down the words in order and number, the reverse of those which she and Mr. Wardlaw had applied to that page when they selected it for their experiment. It took some time to do, but it came out clear at last:

"In safety. Bring her to O——. Intelligence shall meet you on road."

The place named was a border city of one of the wildest Western States of America; and Florence, astonished at the intelligence, at her own success, and at the service required of her, was profoundly puzzled to explain how the missive could have reached her in the time that had elapsed since Mr. Wardlaw's flight. When she discussed the matter afterwards with Richard Peveril, she and he arrived at the conclusion that Mr. Wardlaw had prepared this communication at Liverpool (from which place it was posted), in consequence of his meeting with Florence at the moment of his flight, and had placed it in the hands of some person there who was in his confidence. He had money to purchase such services, and they must have been bought, or his escape would have been impossible. The understanding would have been that, when a cable-message in certain terms should reach this agent, the prepared letter should be forwarded. Thus they interpreted the circumstance. It was further agreed between them that the unhappy wife of the absconder should not be informed of the name of the place mentioned in her husband's communication. "In safety" might mean all it said; but it might not; and if Gertrude Wardlaw did not know, she could not be tricked or surprised into betraying the secret. She had now been very ill for some days—ill enough to alarm Florence. The change in all her modes of life, added to mental suffering, was telling heavily upon her. When Richard Peveril left Florence, she found Mrs. Wardlaw crying over some papers in the bedroom which the two women shared, and, on inquiry, learned that nothing new had occurred; but that it was the anniversary of her wedding-day, and she was overcome by old reminiscences. Then Florence told her that, at least, she might dismiss one miserable, haunting apprehension from her mind: her husband was in safety. The poor woman received the news and its explanation with tearful joy, but when she understood the purport of the message he had sent, she became extremely agitated, and declared that it was "Impossible! impossible!"

"I cannot go to him!" she said, wildly. "I cannot go to him! Florence, I am dying—dying of all this shame and misery. Not of the poverty which is staring me in the face; don't think that. I could bear that as well as another. Why should I not? And not altogether of the shame for him! not of the shame of finding him to be so different from all I believed him! No; though that might have killed me, it is not killing me. There is another mortal agent at work. I have kept it from you, Florence; it is the only secret I have ever kept from you, and now I can do so no longer."

Florence Cheyne looked at her friend in astonishment, and, for the first time, realised the terrible change the last few weeks had wrought in her; realised the meaning of the sunken eyes, their colour faded, and their smiles quenched; the dry lips; the thinned hair; the complexion, from which all its bloom had vanished—and read in them the record of a broken heart. It had not taken long to do; perhaps the habit of happiness had made it all the easier.

"I cannot go to him, Florence," she said. "I have been the cause of it all. He would not mind that, I know, if I could meet him with an unchanged heart, but that can never be, and I thank God that I am unfit to make the effort. I could not see him again, ever, in this world; in the next, it will not matter. You must know, dearest, best friend, that I could never make that journey."

"I fear I do," was Florence Cheyne's reply.

"Of course you do. Until this came, you had no need to think of whether I was more or less weak, but you see it now. And you wonder what my wild words mean—that it is I who have done this?"

"Indeed I do," said Florence, taking her hand, and endeavouring to soothe her; "indeed I do. You! When were you anything but his good angel?"

"When I put him into the power of a demon, of a merciless monster, who has ruined him."

"Ha!" exclaimed Florence. "He said an enemy had done this. Was his meaning the same as yours?"

"Yes, yes; he must have meant it. I have kept this to myself, Florence, through all these weeks, because I could not endure to speak the words; because the wound is so deep and so sore that the gentlest hand—even yours—could not touch it without inflicting on me greater agony than I could bear. But I must speak now. You must know all, that you may tell him all when I am gone."

"I?"

"Yes, Florence, you; for you will go to him, dear, though I never shall. You will carry to the exile and the outlaw the truth—his wife's revelation of it, with his wife's farewell. It may be possible that when he knows the truth, when he can trace the author of his ruin, he will do something to clear himself in a measure; at least, he will not carry the whole load of the world's odium. I am too ignorant of business and of law, and all the terrible things which were never more than names to me, to understand exactly how it is with him, but I cannot help thinking that he might, perhaps, come back and face the worst that could befall him, if he only knew."

"If he only knew what?" said Florence.

"I will tell you presently," said Mrs. Wardlaw, and she laid her hand upon a roll of writing beside her, clutching it nervously with her long thin fingers. "I will tell you now. Let me begin with a question. You have been with us from the first. Do you believe that I love my husband?"

"Why, what an absurd question! Of course I believe it. Whoever could have doubted it who saw you with him, or saw you since? I, above all, who have lived with you so long!"

"So far, well. Now answer me another question. Do you remember when I told you first that I was to be his wife?"

"I remember it perfectly. I could repeat every word that you said to me that day."

"Did you think I was going to marry him then for money, or for ambition, or for anything but love?"

"For love only," said Florence emphatically. "We talked a good deal, as I remember, about his money, and all you meant to do with it for myself and others; but that it never entered into your calculations as a serious motive, I am as sure as I am of my life."

"You will tell him that?" asked Mrs. Wardlaw eagerly.

"If I ever see him, I will tell him anything you bid me," said Florence; "but surely he needs no such assurance—never could have needed it."

"No wonder you should think so, but you will know why I ask you by-and-by. I only want to tell you this: I never really loved any man but Gilbert. I did get into a foolish entanglement before I knew him with another man, but it never was an engagement, and I never really cared for him. I fancied I did, but found out that it was only a fancy when I met Gilbert. It would have been exactly the same, if Gilbert had been the poor man, and the other the rich. You believe me, don't you, Florence?"

"I implicitly believe you; but tell me what this has to do with the accusation you have just brought against yourself."

Mrs. Wardlaw leaned back in her chair, and put her hand to her heart.

"I cannot," she said. "I thought I was stronger, but that pain has come again."

She remained silent, with closed eyes and white lips, for several seconds' space, while the only too familiar spasm passed over her. When she had somewhat recovered, Florence besought her to say no more, but to rest until evening, when Richard Peveril was to see them again—to rest from the excitement of the first communication which had reached them in so strange a manner.

"I will—I will," whispered Mrs. Wardlaw. "Lay me down, Florence, and put my shawl over me, for I feel cold and strangely worn out. I think I can sleep. Sit by me for awhile, and read this."

"Read that!" said Florence. "What is it?"

"It is a packet which was put into my hand when I left my old home for ever, and it will tell you my story."

Very gently and tenderly Florence Cheyne laid the almost unrecognisable woman back on the shabby couch, arranged her pillows, and covered her up warmly. It was a hot day, but Mrs. Wardlaw's hands felt like ice, and her lips trembled with cold. With curious suddenness complete exhaustion had succeeded to the excitement she had displayed only a few minutes before, and in a very short time she fell into an uneasy slumber. Then Florence, sitting by her, as she had requested, unfolded the packet of writing and perused its contents with attention, which rapidly deepened into inexpressible indignation and pain.

* * * * *

"Speak low, she is still sleeping," said Florence, as she softly closed the folding-door which divided the two rooms, and came forward to meet Richard Peveril. "I fear she is very ill to-day; she has taken the news strangely. Good heavens, Richard!" she added, "what is the matter? Has anything new happened?"

"Yes," he said, drawing her close to him and speaking in a low tone. "I have found out something more—something terrible. Florence, Mr. Wardlaw has robbed me!"

"Robbed you, Richard!" She held him at arm's length. "What do you mean?"

"It is too true. You know Levinge's papers that I told you of; you know that Wardlaw came to advise me upon them; you know that since then I have done nothing in the matter; that Levinge wrote me to let things be, until he should get down to the Gold Coast?"

"Yes, yes," answered Florence.

"I never looked at the papers—I never opened the boxes until this morning; and when I did, I found blank paper in the place of ten thousand pounds' worth of securities!"

"Richard, can this be true?" Florence sank helplessly into a chair.

"It is quite true, and I remember it all now. Oh, Florence! he must have planned it; the devilish device must have come into his head that evening when he and I walked in the shrubbery, and I told him of my new client, and the lift that I had had. He made the appointment to come and see me on the following day; he entered into the whole affair; he looked at the leases and the maps—every paper, every scrap connected with Levinge's property—and took such an interest in it as I thought I never could feel sufficiently grateful for, his views were so clear and his experience so great."

"But how could he have done it? How can you be sure those papers were there when you showed him the things?"

"The boxes were on the table; the railroad and bank shares were all in one, the one, I remember now distinctly, which stood before him. He had just been saying something about overdoing railroads when a sudden faintness seized him. He said he had been subject to it for some time, and I went to get him some wine."

"And you left the room with that box open?"

"Of course I did. It would never have occurred to me, I am afraid, to do otherwise; but I remember that he had drawn it towards him, and was leaning his head on its edge."

"How long were you away?"

"Not two minutes. I had to open the cupboard, get out a bottle of wine and a glass; but I had not to draw the cork. I do not think I can have been quite two minutes out of the room."

"What did you do when you came back?"

"I gave him the wine; he drank it, and said he was better. I locked the box and put it back in the safe. I never opened it again until to-day!"

"And you are sure those papers are gone?"

"I am quite sure."

"That they cannot have got mixed up with any others?"

"That is impossible. It is equally impossible that they can have gone in another way."

"Ten thousand pounds!" repeated Florence, aghast. "What does this mean to you, Richard?"

"It means ruin as complete as Wardlaw's, if Levinge does not prove to be the most noble and generous of men."

"You will tell him?"

"As soon as I can communicate with him he shall know the truth. He will have only my word for it, but I believe he will take my word."

"What use," said Florence, "could Mr. Wardlaw have made of these papers so immediately, for it was only a day or two before the crash came?"

"No doubt he pawned them at some of the many places where he did his large business, and raised money on them. I suppose it was the last desperate attempt, and might have saved him for a few days but for a counter-stroke of ill-fortune at the moment. At all events, Florence, our hopes melt into thin air, even if Levinge believes my story and disgrace does not fall upon me. Such a load as this would swamp a bigger bark than my little cockboat. As for that, it goes all to pieces. How many years, if ever I get the chance of doing it, shall I have to work to replace this money?"

Florence sat speechless, her hands clasped in her lap. Peveril leaned against the table speechless too. Under the crushing influence of this cruel blow Florence forgot the preoccupation of the last few hours — Mr. Wardlaw's mysterious message; his wife's unexpected reception of it; the revelation made by the paper which she had just read. "But is it—?" said Florence; then, instead of completing her sentence, she started from her chair and held up a finger in an attitude of warning.

"What is the matter?"

"Surely she gave a strangely deep sigh," said Florence, and stole on tip-toe to the folding-door. The room within was almost dark, and now quite silent. Florence struck a light, bent with it in her hand over the couch, and called Richard Peveril.

He was by her side in a moment.

"Look at her," said Florence. "How strange her face is!"

Richard Peveril looked into Mrs. Wardlaw's face, touched the hand which lay upon the shawl, laid it down, and took the light from Florence. He set it upon the mantelpiece, and placing his arm firmly round the girl, who was trembling violently, he told her what that strange sigh had meant. It was Gertrude Wardlaw's last!

* * * * *

"And now that it is all over," said Florence Cheyne to Richard Peveril, when Gertrude Wardlaw had been laid to rest in a suburban cemetery, and that chapter in their lives was closed, "I am going to find Mr. Wardlaw."

"You?"

"Yes, I. I am going to tell him of his wife's death, to reveal to him the story which killed her, or if not quite that, certainly helped to kill her. I am going to bring back his confession of the wrong he did you, and so to clear your character in the eyes of your friend, and, if need be, of the world. I have money enough for this purpose; it could not be better expended, and I have not the smallest fear of the journey. I will not go beyond the borders of civilisation. His message makes me understand that I shall hear of him on my road. When I do hear, I will stop, and communicate with him from thence. I shall be quite safe, Richard, and this thing will be the greatest, the only relief you can know. It may be that he has so dealt with those papers that, when you have his acknowledgment of what he has done, you may be able to recover them. At all events, we shall know. She said to me, that day, 'You will tell him,' and I answered her, 'Yes, I will tell him.' Dearest Richard, I am going to keep my word."

At first Richard Peveril combated this project warmly, but he found Florence adhered to it firmly; and, as there was no doubt that it offered the only chance of remedying, to some extent, the grievous wrong he had suffered, he consented. Florence left London for an Irish seaport town a few days after Mrs. Wardlaw's funeral—it was understood in the Bloomsbury lodging-house that "the young person who lived with Mrs. Wardlaw had taken a situation"—and a little later she sailed for America.

CHAPTER III. TWO WORDS ON A BROADSHEET.

Then time began to roll on heavily, indeed, for Richard Peveril. To have kept up his courage and maintained his confidence unbroken would have been a difficult task for an ordinary nature. It was a peculiarly difficult one for Richard Peveril, because his was not a sanguine disposition, and he felt anxiety keenly. Suspense in its direst form became the normal condition of his life. On another side of it, things were looking better and brighter for Richard Peveril. He was getting a good deal to do, and it was business of a satisfactory and respectable kind. The home which he and Florence had so often talked of, and dreamed of together and apart, would have been very fairly within his grasp now, had not this cloud suspended itself between them and it. As things were going now with him, Richard Peveril would have been able to provide for the modest requirements with which he and his betrothed would have been well content. He had taken that turn which waits for men somewhere on their way of life, and it would lead him into safe and respectable professional competency. And Florence was away, beyond the reach even of communication by letter with her; he could not tell her this good news; he could not point to her the nearness of the goal on which his eyes and his thoughts were always fixed. It was a brave and noble thing which she was doing, but, oh! how he wished it done.

One day—his mind very full of these thoughts, and the sense of waiting hanging upon him oppressively—Richard Peveril received a telegram. His heart gave a great bound as he opened the missive and his eyes fell upon the name of the sender.

Four hours earlier on that same day Florence Cheyne had despatched from the office in the Metropolitan Hotel, New York, the words which Richard Peveril read in his room, in the old Inn at Holborn. They were as follows:—

"December 8th, 187—.
"Metropolitan Hotel, New York.

"Found. I sail per Delaware on tenth. Write to Queenstown."

"Found!" repeated Richard Peveril to himself, as he looked at the words with brightening eyes. "Found! So she has succeeded! So she has kept her word! Heaven bless her! for the bravest and best girl that ever a man trusted. What a leap in the dark it was; but she is safe, and there is everything in that word 'found!'" He sat down at his desk and began to count the days which must intervene before he was to write that first letter which was to break so long a silence. Perhaps she would write to him before she left New York—there would be a mail within a day or two—perhaps she had even already written, and her letter might come to break the interval of waiting. With the quick unreasonableness of human nature, it was not half an hour after Richard Peveril had received the telegram which meant so much to him, and conveyed to him so great a relief, before he began to think how terrible to get through the intervening days would be; not half an hour until that period of time assumed dimensions to his fancy not far from being as intolerable, as the time that now lay behind him had been in fact. He was conscious of his weakness, but there it was for all that; though he could smile now as he thought how sharply Florence would rebuke his impatience. Of course he would write to Queenstown; he wished he could have afforded to neglect his business just for the interval of time that would be necessary to go to Queenstown; but this was a luxury of sentiment out of his reach. It occurred to him that he might answer her message by the cable, and he even rose and put on his hat, and went half-way down the stairs, with the intention of doing so, but he abandoned the notion on reflection. The words he longed to say to Florence were not words to pass under any eyes except hers and his. So he went back to his desk, but not to his work; that was beyond him, for that one evening at least. He began to write the letter which was not to be despatched for a fortnight, then and there. He would write a little in it every day, he thought—a large packet should meet his Florence on her arrival. How warmly she would welcome it, how pleased and cheered she would be to have the fervent expression of his love and his thoughts, even in the cold form of written language, before his lips should speak them!

But the days that went so slowly by were full of suffering of a strange kind for a man who had had no previous consciousness of nerves. The season was bad, and tales of storm and shipwreck, and disaster at sea, haunted Richard's excited imagination, night and day. Something, he thought, was hanging over him worse than Gilbert Wardlaw's treachery; worse than the consequences his own carelessness might bring upon him;—something worse even than anything he dared to picture to himself. It was a dreary, feverish time, that fortnight of waiting, and thinking, and brooding over he scarcely knew what nameless dread, but somehow it came to an end at last, and the time arrived for adding the closing lines to the letter which was to be the companion of the closing hours of Florence Cheyne's journey. The morning of the day on which it was to leave Richard Peveril's hands found him unusually busy—a state of things which continued until an advanced hour of the afternoon. After all, on this last day his last words must be few. They were few, and as follows:—

"So I bid you farewell, and welcome! Only a few more hours of laggard time; only a few hundred miles of envious sea, after the Atlantic thousands—for I am coming to meet you at Liverpool—and I shall look in your face again and tell you, if I can, what the sight of it means to me."

It was the twenty-second of December; weather appropriate to the season; the lungs of the City choked with fog; the eyes of the City smarting with it; the temper of the City at the last pitch of exasperation with it, and Richard Peveril was almost beside himself with impatience as he fought through its damp, ill-smelling folds on his way to the nearest post-office, for it is perilously near post hour. He has lingered a little over the closing lines of his letter, and it is of the last importance to him to post it in time for that night's mail. If anybody could have seen Richard Peveril's face as he came down the dingy staircase from his dingy chambers, in one of the old Inns of Court which give egress into the crowded thoroughfare of Holborn, and was met by the crawling cloud of fog which came up over the worn flags like a creeping tide over shingle, that person would have seen a face full of keen anxiety mingling with the impatience of the moment. With much difficulty, and barely avoiding collision with several fellow-sufferers on the pavement, Richard Peveril at length attained the district post-office, and deposited his letter in the wide-mouthed receiving-box marked for "Country and Abroad." He stood for a moment, with a sense of relief and satisfaction, looking at the clock with the bright lamp above it, defying even the obscurity of the fog, which showed him that he had saved the post by just three minutes. About there, in fact, there was a little oasis of light—the shaded gas-burners of a neighbouring shop and the lamp of the district office combined to illumine one spot on the pavement and about a yard beyond. It was that on which the newspaper boys had spread out, before the fog gathered so heavily, the earliest editions of the evening papers. There were the broadsheets, held down at their corners by stones, with the wreaths of dirty mist curling over them, forsaken by the boys. It takes a good deal to beat a London newspaper boy off his post and to silence the clamour of his importunate tongue, but the seasonable weather had done even that. Two or three of the youthful purveyors of its afternoon food to the insatiable curiosity of London were clustered, with their bundles under their arms, round a friendly lamp-post at a little distance, but a gulf of darkness was between them and Richard Peveril when his eye fell on two words which showed up in the concentrated light upon the pink surface of an early Globe. The words were "Wreck" and "Delaware." For one instant Richard Peveril stood still, the next he darted off the pavement, clutched the broadsheet, pushed back the swing-door of the district post-office, and found himself looking at the words in a blaze of light that seemed almost to blind him. He held the dirty sheet at arm's length with one hand, with the other he grasped the rail of the desk, behind which stood the busy clerks heedless of him. People came in and went out; the door swung fifty times in a minute; letters and papers poured into the box; belated correspondents came hurrying in for stamps, and put distracting questions to the clerks; the rush and haste of the busy office were at their height; but Richard Peveril saw nothing but the inexorable characters on the broadsheet; heard nothing but the throbbing of his brain and heart, until a cold horror seemed to chill them into pulseless misery. So passed perhaps a minute and a half before a head was raised from behind the rail, and a man asked curtly, "Well, sir; what do you want?"

"Is this true?" was Richard Peveril's answer, as he laid the broadsheet on the counter, and pointed to the words "Wreck," "Delaware."

"Don't know, I'm sure," replied the busy official, who merely glanced at them. "Trouble you to move, sir," as two or three persons came pressing up behind the individual whose question was no business of the office. Peveril crushed the broadsheet in his hand, stepped back, and went out into the fog. A ghastlier face than his was not abroad on that November evening. He came to the lamp-post and found a newspaper boy. "Globe, sir? Echo? Evening Standard?" He took them all. He knew it was true; but he caught at the mockery of a hope. If only one newspaper had the story it might be false. Then he half fought, half felt his way back to the dingy Inn, where, by this time, the curling clouds had crept further and further, like a tide creeping in upon shingle, until the flagstones and the walls were wet as though with spray.

CHAPTER IV. TREASURES OF THE DEEP.

The Delaware had struck on the Fastnet Rock in a fog, and gone down with all hands. The catastrophe spread consternation far and wide. She was a great steamer, heavily freighted with human lives, and with a rich cargo in cotton and bullion. It did not matter to the dead whose fault it was that the look-out had been unavailing and the light off, or why Fastnet had flung its broad beam over the mist-wrapped sea in vain. The living might quarrel over that point at their leisure. Only a few of the drifting corpses had been brought to land on Cape Clear Island, and it was better so: better that they should lie undisturbed in the sea depths, than be seen of men's eyes in the unsightly indecorum of such a death. But the things of another kind of value, which had gone down with the Delaware, were not to be given up to the greedy maw of the deep without a fight for it. Only a few hours after the news of the wreck had been flashed from one end of the kingdom to the other, the divers were hastening towards the far extremity of the County Cork, to commence operations. So swift, so sudden had been the destruction of the ship—at least, thus those learned in such matters guessed from the fact that so little of the floating ruin of her was anywhere to be seen—that in all probability she had sunk like a stone. There was good reason to suppose that she would be found under the waves tolerably whole, and her cargo undispersed. Among the great number of persons who flocked to the coast of the mainland, and across to Cape Clear, eager for news of the catastrophe, was one man whose distraught and wretched appearance attracted much compassionate notice, of which he was unconscious. His first inquiries had been directed to the finders of the corpses which had been washed ashore. The latter were four in number, and they were lying still undisturbed, awaiting recognition, if such were possible, and the formal verdict of the coroner's inquest. A simple question and answer sufficed to assure him that the object of his search was not among the ghastly trophies of the victory of the sea; the four corpses were those of men. He next inquired whether it was thought probable that any more would come ashore, but the people answered they thought not. "They're in Davy's Locker, yer honour," was the answer he received, "an' the kay turned on thim, God help thim!" He had sought in vain upon the land; his Florence was numbered among the treasures of the deep.

Men were going down under the waves to do that terrible duty, which had always had, to his imagination, a peculiarly weird and ghastly attraction. To him the craft of the diver seemed to be the very strangest and most unaccountable of all that human beings had invented, for human beings to take to voluntarily. The peril of it, the horror of it, the sights which it must reveal, the dreadful associations of it, had often fascinated Richard's fancy, to which nothing could equal in its revolting pictures the bottom of the sea. It was strange how suddenly it had lost its dread and its horror for him. Somewhere in its awful depths lay the woman he loved, and he would have gone down into them gladly. Trained hands were even now busy with that ghastly task. The bodies of the drowned passengers in the ill-fated ship would be brought up to the surface in due course, but it was only by the use of certain influence that Richard Peveril could ensure a closer search for Florence, and, it might be, for the treasure her words implied that she was bringing with her.

He forced himself to talk with an old man upon the island, who had been a famous diver in his time, and heard from him of the immense difficulty with which the bodies of the drowned were sometimes recovered, especially when catastrophes had been sudden, and men and women sleeping in their berths had been killed by the crashing of a ship and the smashing of her timbers and her machinery, and how often those corpses were left in their indiscriminate ruin, while more valuable waifs were brought ashore. This old man had a story about one ship which had gone down on the east coast of Ireland, and how he had dived for the rescue of her cargo. "She looked," he said, "for all the world like any ship upon the surface, except that there was a hole broken in her side where she had been struck; her boats were slung almost uninjured, coils of rope were lying on the main-deck; the hatches were open, and the door above the chief-cabin stairs; the fishes darted in and out of it, and the crabs were going about their work already."

Richard Peveril listened with eager interest until he spoke these concluding words, and then he turned away with a shudder, and shut himself up for the grim purpose of writing out a description of Florence Cheyne, in the little room in the small public-house where he had secured a lodging. There was an official who took compassion upon Richard Peveril, arising from some slight knowledge of him, and he had promised him that special instructions should be given to the men with reference to their search in the women's cabin.

If the theory of the wreck were correct—that catastrophe which no human eye remaining unclosed in the sleep of death had seen—it had taken place in the depth of night. Florence, Richard Peveril argued, would have been sleeping in her berth, and assuredly would have had near at hand the box containing her most valued possessions. He thought he could make quite sure of that point. It would be a japanned box, with her name upon it—he knew the box. The men might find her sleeping calmly under the water unmutilated, her fair form still to retain just for a little while its likeness to her old self. He could not imagine how he should bear it if this were so, and she should be brought to him on the coast of that wild island to receive Christian burial at his hands; but he would have to bear it, and it was the very best that was left for him to hope for now. What if it should be otherwise—what if the divers should find a mere mass of horrible confusion and hideous death like the crowded slaughter of battle, with the added horror of the confined space and the mashed masses of the ship's carcase. Even in that case there would be still one chance of identifying her, and he stated it in the description which he confided to the friendly official: "The woman is tall, full-formed, with very long raven black hair. On her right arm there is a broad silver bracelet, fastened with a spring. There will probably be found near her an iron box with her name upon the lid. The name is Florence Cheyne."

The paper was in the hands of the official; the men were at their work; the tug which conveyed them to the scene of the wreck, with its attendant dummy, lay off the Fastnet Rock; and the five miles of sea between the fatal spot and Cape Clear Island were dotted with many small craft; but Richard Peveril waited on the land all one day in vain, and when the night came, wondering somewhat how he had retained his senses, he rushed out into the darkness and wandered for some hours along the wild coast to the south-west point of the island, trying to tire himself out with bodily fatigue, so that rest might come to his weary brain. The night was still and clear, and there was a new moon; he walked until he could hardly crawl back to his rude, miserable quarters, and regained his little room, to which he passed easily and unquestioned through the door that was only on the latch, feeling as if the sound of the slow-breaking waves upon the shore—for the sea was as calm as in summer—must drive him mad, or at least deaf, by the morning.

When the morning dawned—it was the morning of Christmas Eve—he was sleeping soundly, in the deep slumber of exhaustion; and the kindly people about, who knew how sore was his "thrubble," kept the place as quiet as they could, that "the crayture, God help him! might not waken up and find it forenint him sooner than could be helped."

He had not been long communing with his tortured thoughts, and as yet no news of the morning's operations had reached the island, when Richard Peveril, gazing wearily from the little window of his humble room, had his attention called to the movements of the idlers on the beach. They were crowding round a sailor who had just landed from a small boat, and was advancing towards the house, eagerly questioned by his companions. As he sighted him at the window the man hailed him, and Richard Peveril went to the door.

"Mr. Peveril, I think, sir?" said the man.

Richard nodded.

"I have a message for you, sir."

"From whom?"

"From the captain, sir;" and with that he put into his hands a brown paper parcel and a letter. The people looked at the messenger and at Peveril, exchanged glances with each other, and slouched away.

"I was to wait outside for your orders," said the man, as he moved off.

Peveril tore the letter open and read these words, written by Captain Craven, the friend of whose influence he had availed himself:

"The box has been found. I send it to you with this under charge of my coxswain, and I will see you to-night, if possible; but I think it better to send you the parcel which has also been found, that you may know the truth without delay. The worst that we feared has happened. The men have made their report: not a single body is unmutilated; no faces are recognisable. On a fractured arm between two planks the man who had your instructions saw this bracelet, and brought it to me. There is no use saying anything about comfort in a case like this. R. C."

Richard Peveril steadied himself with his back to the wall while he read this letter. He flung it on the ground, and tore off the covering of the small packet which accompanied it, disclosing the flat silver bracelet with the well-worn look of that which he had seen so often on Florence's arm. It was not his gift; it had belonged to her mother, and Florence had worn it for many years. He thrust it into his breast, caught up his hat and Captain Craven's letter, and went out to look for the messenger, who was standing, with two or three compassionate gossips, a few yards off at the back of the house.

"Where is the box you were to bring me with this?" said Peveril.

But the owner of the public-house, who formed one of the group, anticipated the coxswain's answer.

"Sure we left it below, sir, with the wife, the way you mightn't see it all at wonst, thinking to break it to you."

"Thank you, my good friend," said Richard Peveril. "But let me have the box, if you please; it is broken to me now. Tell Captain Craven," said he to the coxswain, "I shall be glad to see him to-night."

In a minute or two they brought him the box. It was a good deal battered, and nearly stove in at one end, but the lock was intact. He took it silently, went into his room, and locked the door. When Richard Peveril found himself alone, with the missive from the sea before him, and the familiar ornament from his dead love's arm in his breast, the whole reality of the truth rushed over him for the first time. How the next hour went over he could not have told. At the end of that time he roused himself sufficiently to think about the contents of the box. What should he find in there? The absconder's confession: the document which should enable him to attempt, at all events, the recovery of the property of his friend and client; which should ease him from the intolerable burthen of a debt which he could hardly ever hope to discharge? It was only in a dim, far-away manner that he thought of these things. They floated over his troubled mind as the masts and cordage of the wreck floated out there over the wild sea, in whose depths his heart lay buried. He apprehended them, but he did not comprehend them.

With the aid of some rough implement

which they brought him he wrenched the padlock from Florence's box, and raised the lid. He could not look into it for a moment; he could not touch it; but when this passing weakness was overcome, he removed the contents, inspecting them one by one, and laying them aside upon the table. There was a packet of his own letters, and a packet of Gertrude Wardlaw's letters to her friend when they were both school-girls, written in holiday times; and there were two packets, severally consisting of a number of sheets of closely-written manuscript; but there was no paper, no letter, no document of any kind in Gilbert Wardlaw's writing, or bearing Gilbert Wardlaw's signature. Patiently Richard Peveril went over the contents of the box a second time. The result was the same; no such thing was there. So all was lost. His love and his future were alike buried with the countless treasures of all the ages which have been swallowed up by the sea!

Richard Peveril replaced the packets of letters in the box, but he kept out the parcels of manuscript. He would read these things, he would force his mind into attention to their contents: thus he would drag through the hours until Captain Craven should come to see him at evening-time, and he should have fresh horrors to face. He unfolded the manuscripts, and found that they were written in the same hand—Florence's. On a strip of paper, fastened to the fly-leaf of the manuscript marked I., were written these words:—

"These are copies made by me from originals which I have placed in the hands of Mr. Gilbert Wardlaw. The first, marked No. I., was handed to Mrs. Wardlaw, as she was leaving her house in Ingot-gardens for the last time. The second, marked No. II., was sent anonymously to her on the evening of the day on which she died, and an hour subsequent to that event. With the exception of myself and Mr. Wardlaw, no one has seen these documents —not even Richard Peveril, my betrothed husband. I considered it my duty to reserve them exclusively for him whom they concerned. It is by his directions that I have made the present copies, and that I retain them in my possession."

This memorandum, to which Florence Cheyne's initials were appended, was dated one day later than her cable telegram to Richard Peveril—the day which preceded the sailing of the Delaware from New York. Richard Peveril greedily devoured them with his eyes; they were probably the very last lines which that beloved hand, lying maimed and dead yonder in the sea, had traced. Then he applied himself to the reading of the manuscripts in the order in which the dead hand had numbered them, and with No. I., which bore, in Florence Cheyne's bold, clear handwriting, the title of—

THE PARTNER'S STORY.

In the story of my life you, Mrs. Wardlaw, cannot fail to be interested. It is a simple narrative, the record of a life turned aside by a great passion from its proper channel; a life which has been marred by no fault of the writer, but by that of others; a life consecrated by him to the accomplishment of one object. I am not so weak as to imagine that you would read this paper—now, in the crisis of your fate—did you not believe your past and present to be indissolubly connected with it. Not so, however, your future. Be under no apprehension concerning the latter. Our paths divide at this point, for ever. My purpose will have been accomplished when you shall have read this revelation. My future is to me as little interesting as it can possibly be to you.

Twenty years ago, a young man commencing life, I rejoiced in the possession of a friend, one sufficiently my senior to enlist my complete affection. To me it has always seemed that among young men there can never be enduring friendship between two of like age. The equality is too great to admit of perfect confidence, unless one be endowed with gifts and character far superior to the other. A Frenchman will tell you that in affairs of the heart there is always one who loves and one who permits the love, and I think that in male friendship the situation is much the same. There is the admirer and the admired. Every boy endowed with a sympathetic nature has his hero-friend, who is bigger than himself, and how much stronger, fleeter, more brilliant, and more clever! The hero accomplishes with ease tasks which seem stupendous to the worshipper. Who but the hero flies first past the goal in the foot race? Whose "catch" on the water and quick, neat feather can be compared with his? Who dives with equal daring? Who cleaves the stream with such a strong telling stroke? Is he not handsomer, braver, and brighter than all others? Are not his verses better turned, and more quickly done, than those of any other boy? Does he not knock off his work as if it were child's play, and wield the pencil as deftly as the willow? As for the hero, he entertains a kindly feeling enough for the worshipper—a pleasant, patronising species of tenderness. The sense of superiority, the pleasant inward sensation of being appreciated, is so delicious to the human, and especially the boyish, breast, that it must be a poor nature which does not bestow the crumb of esteem in return for the full rich banquet of love and admiration, so unhesitatingly spread! The hero thinks his worshipper a good fellow—a "capital fellow"—and does him any service which does not require the hero to play the second part, and he takes the delight of a patron in the little successes of his protégé.

Such a youth was that of Gilbert Wardlaw and Henry Morley. Under the ægis of Gilbert, I passed the few happy days of my life. He was my hero, my demigod, who could not fail of making his mark in the world. He was so superior to his fellows, this splendid Alcibiades of mine, a dandy among scholars, a man of business among dandies, a scholar among men of business. I had considered the law a sufficiently bright career for me, but how I bewailed the resolution which confined his splendid powers to the narrow compass of a merchant's office! I told him as much, when, in his early manhood, he resolutely undertook the task selected for him. "Not at all, my dear Harry," he would say; "you talk of the prosiness and plodding of commerce like a great school-girl, and lament that I have not given what you are pleased to consider my talents, to the bar, to the pen, or to the scalpel. I admit that I might, with luck, gain position in one of these, but if you come to talk of plodding, your real plodder is your professional man, not your man of business. Look at the men we know, who have achieved what is called eminence in their profession. They are, if not old, at least middle-aged. For twenty or thirty years they have been working at a professional career, success in which means, I take it, increased work. Half-starved during their best years, they reach at last, perhaps, the goal; but when they get there, they are tired out, broken in health, encumbered by debt, soured by disappointment, vexed by delay, obliged to live like anchorites to do their work. That is their success. More work and ever more work—not a prospect of delight to me by any means. They mistake the means for the end. The real use of work, my dear fellow, is to purchase ease, wealth, and luxury; the power of indulging your taste for elegance, for art, for—if you care about it—learned leisure. In our day there is only one truly royal road to comfort, pleasure, and dignity. It is commerce. Is it prosier work, think you, to pore over a ledger than over a treatise on the law of real property? Even if it were so, look at the rewards of the two kinds of work. I have spoken of professional men, and you know how truly I have gauged their career. Look now at commerce and at the men engaged in it. In early manhood—before they have even had time to get married—they are above the world. There is no plodding commerce now. The whole world of trade is a great green table, from which the clever player takes up his original stake an hundredfold. Men do not see anything prosy about Antonio; and what were the Venetian merchant-patricians and their argosies to our kings of the mine, the rail, and the market? Pettifoggers, my dear boy. Where a Venetian owned a paltry half-dozen trumpery vessels, manned with sailors who feared to go out of sight of land, our men own whole fleets, which cleave the ocean in every latitude. If you want romance, look for it in trade. The master of a fleet is undone by a new railway king; the latter is demolished by a rival line; a turn of the Stock-market makes, or mars, a score of fortunes. If you love the profit, excitement, and the romance of modern life, you must seek it in the City—where you may really live a life, enjoy a career, and make your mark while you are young enough to enjoy your position."

"Very well for you, Wardlaw, who have a neat capital to begin with, but for others who have not, the steady plodding life of an expectant barrister is, perhaps, better. Besides, your career requires a certain daring—nay, genius—to make a success. A single slip, and you are gone."

"One must not slip, old fellow. Besides, 'the game is worth the candle.' A quick eye is all that is wanted, and a little capital. The opportunity of a bold stroke is sure to come of itself. The hour will come if the man be only ready."

"Don't be in too great a hurry, however, and flounder on the threshold." Such was the impertinent advice of my half-fledged wisdom to the clever man, who was five years my senior.

"Don't you croak. I shall take care of myself well enough."

I had just entered at one of the Inns of Court with the object of qualifying myself for the practice of the law. My means were not sufficiently great to induce me to follow the advice of Gilbert Wardlaw, and I plodded on for a long time, seeing but little of my friend. I heard of him often enough as a new star in the world of finance. His early ventures had been singularly successful. He was undoubtedly well informed, and had, besides, the hardihood to act upon his information. At the early age of twenty-eight he was already a successful man, entrusted with secrets such as the graybeards—his rivals—would have given their ears to possess. He had undoubtedly made money, and lived as if there were to be no end to the making of it. Occasionally we met, but my studious life withdrew me very much from his society, for he was of a gay and pleasant turn—a City man of City men in his business hours, but one who apparently left trade behind him as he passed westward through Temple Bar. You will find it difficult to recognise Gilbert Wardlaw—the home-loving, colourless man, of no particular tastes, except that for money-making, and no eyes for any but one human being—in this sketch of him, when he was young, long, long before you ever saw him. Why, you were a child, an innocent child, knowing nothing about money and men's motives, when he and I were already trained runners in the race of life, and he was, even then, a winner of every prize. I pass over several years; their history has nothing to do with the later time, and has no interest, no meaning, no memories for me. Did I succeed? I don't know; I don't care. It was not utter failure; it was not brilliant luck like Wardlaw's. No matter now. I come to seven years ago, and I know that your eyes will fasten themselves on this writing from this moment, and your heart will beat quickly for once at my bidding, to go on beating quickly until you shall have read to the end—and after.

Seven years ago an event occurred which influenced my entire existence. I fell in love—deeply, passionately, entirely. I need hardly tell you with whom. A glance from the eyes, for whose perusal alone this narrative is written, would once have transported me to the hardly bluer heaven. Until I met my fate, I had never dreamed that my being could be so entirely absorbed by passion. But Gertrude Ludlow was beautiful enough to bewitch the soul of any man, and what wonder was it that I became her slave! Looking back to those days of anxiety and tremor, of hope and fear, I often ask myself whether I am indeed the same man whose heart would bound at the rustle of a silken robe; whose arm would quiver at the light touch of a gloved hand; who found in the atmosphere of his love a new world of thought and sensation! The room, the garden, the theatre which held her was paradise in my eyes. It is needless to dwell upon this phase of my existence. I loved, and believed myself loved in return.

There was nothing in the rank of my beloved to place my union with her in the region of impossibility. She was the daughter of a gentleman of respectable, but small means. I believe his property was realised afterwards, and absorbed into a greater fortune. I wonder where it is now! No, by-the-by, I don't wonder—I know. The only disparity was in our years; but the lady who will read this can hardly maintain that that was a serious obstacle. I was five years younger than Wardlaw. I was in a position to maintain a wife well, for my professional income was good, and though the property of which I was the entire master was slender, like many men in my position I believed in my future, and thought that, with Gertrude for my wife, I should lack no incentive to make my career increasingly honourable and profitable.

The person who reads these lines will know whether I was entitled to consider that my love was returned. We were never formally engaged, though I pleaded hard that we might be so. The actual putting on of an engaged ring may be a ceremony which, after all, only binds one party to the contract, leaving the other absolutely free to change her mind if she pleases; but I was anxious that some formal ratification of our intentions should take place. Gertrude treated my wish as a freak of fancy. "Why," said she, with a satiric tone, but a loving glance, "why should we anticipate our bonds by the silly rehearsal of a betrothal? If we are sure of each other, what additional security can be derived from forms and ceremonies? We are not like other people. We have nobody to consult. We fear no family opposition. Neither I nor you, my dear

Harry, have grim parents to coerce us." I gave up the point—as who would not have given it up in my place?—but I was not satisfied. She took too lightly what was all the world to me. But yet it was pleasant, this fool's paradise of hope, and doubt, and love, although it contained that fibre of bitterness which runs through every human tie. A month or two of pleasant anxiety and loving doubt wore on. I noticed that the capricious element in Gertrude's character developed strongly. Her visits to Lady McKayman, her great aunt, who lived in a huge mansion in Hawkley-square, increased in frequency. My heart misgave me. My beloved appeared gradually to shake off my influence, and assumed a fashionable worldly tone which put me to inconceivable pain. The atmosphere of Hawkley-square was clearly better suited to the disposition of Gertrude than the respectable, but intensely dull, terrace in Bayswater, where the first acts of our life drama had been played. It was not to be wondered at, perhaps, for there she met gay young people of the great world, and the home which she adorned was prosy. At home she had only an elderly father and mother, who had not married young, and were dull company for the bright beauty who was their only child. I liked the quiet couple, and they liked me; they would have trusted me with Gertrude. When they died, within a few months of each other—the lady who reads this will hardly have forgotten the two events, and how they put an end to her most brilliant season at the great house in Ingot-gardens—most brilliant, that is, but one—I felt more free to act as I intended than I had felt while they lived. Gertrude's mother knew what I felt, and though she pleaded with me that her daughter was not engaged to me; that she was breaking no pledge to me, violating no duty, because she owed me none, Mrs. Ludlow did not, in her heart, excuse the girl. She had led me to believe that she loved me, that she would be mine, and now her conduct—she was hardly ever at home, and I had no entrée among her associates—was filling me with the torturing apprehension that I might miss the great prize of my life. I became restless. Ungifted with the resolution of those who can throw aside actual pain, or find refuge from it in an absorbing pursuit, I became as one possessed with a wandering demon. My once-loved books were cast aside, and the dry technicalities of my profession presented themselves in their naked repulsiveness. Each day seemed of more insufferable length than the last. I tried every device to allay my restlessness. I bought a horse, and galloped furiously along country lanes and the stretches of common round London. I bought an outrigger, and cut through the waves of the silent highway, not with the delicious sensation that the oarsman should experience, but with sullen doggedness or savagely-rapid stroke. Useless all! As night came on I would find myself hovering around the ill-omened mansion in Hawkley-square, pacing moodily up and down, and looking at the house where, as I thought, my beloved was happier than in dusty Bayswater, with her prosy parents and my uninteresting self. Restlessness and irresolution preyed upon me till, driven to desperation, I told out all my misery to Gertrude. The lady who peruses this will remember how my appeal was met. Pretended indignation at my presumption; bold, audacious denial of my sacred right; the trumpery triumph of a false and fickle woman in the base plea that she was not "engaged" to me! Not engaged! She dared to turn her own argument against a formal betrothal into a defence of her conduct; she dared to tell me that when she imagined she cared for me—that was the way in which she put the feeling I had staked my life to win—she had not known my real character and disposition. She dared to tell me—me, the man who would have put the world under her feet, with his own heart on the top of it for her to tread on if she would have been his—that she had never loved me; it was only a fancy she had loved, it was not me! It had passed away, she was free, and she would not marry a man of my temper if he could make her a queen!

I was struck with amazement, incredulity, and despair. I humbled myself to entreaty—I, who had all the right which a man's utmost constancy, and every encouragement and promise, short of a formal betrothal, can give; but I humbled myself in vain. Gertrude was firm in her refusal to listen to me, though her tone softened considerably, and she ended by asking me to be her friend. Her friend! The usual formula of a woman's heartless and cowardly falsehood. I controlled myself; I knew it was my sole chance. She could not complain of my temper on that occasion; but she added a crowning insult to her treatment of me by the look of relief which she admitted into her face, and the tone in which she bade me adieu, congratulating herself that it would be "all right" in future, and "so nice to be real friends, and have done with quarrelling, and lectures, and nonsense."

When I was alone, and could think, I deliberately rejected the reason she had dared to assign for her conduct. It was no discovery of discordant elements in our respective dispositions; it was no dread of my temper; it was no change of "fancy." It was the temptation of riches, and of fashion; the girl's nature was growing corrupt under the influence of the people among whom she chiefly lived. Her head was turned with admiration and flattery; she longed for the great world of fashion, to which my moderate means could not purchase her access. This accursed ambition was my enemy with her. Her head was turned, not her heart; oh no, not her heart! She mistook her own feelings. This would pass. I would hope. Good Heaven, I *must* hope! What would become of me if I could not hope?

Under the new "friendly" régime I was careful, patient, circumspect, and I employed many devices to brighten up her home for her, and induce her to be more there. I never alarmed her by any demonstrations; I ruled myself with a rod of iron. Her manner grew cheerful, easy, unrestrained. I was full of hope, aye, full of hope, though she was more frequently than ever at Hawkley-square; and I never called at the home at Bayswater and learned that she was not there, but at Lady McKayman's, that I did not walk home to my solitary chambers with a chill clinging round my heart. On those occasions, when I saw her on her return, she would have all kinds of stories to tell of the fashionable world and its doings. She had obviously made a success in Lady McKayman's set, and I was right—her head was turned by it. How prettily she talked of balls and operas, theatres and garden-parties, and how swiftly she had caught the proper social tone! At first she enjoyed the amusements themselves frankly and heartily, like a child, but I noted that of late she spoke less of the scenes and more of the actors. Did she, I asked myself, care for anybody else? Had another man usurped my place in her heart—my rightful place, despite her disclaimer, and my dissembling acquiescence? No—it could not be. As I walked one afternoon in the Temple-gardens, I tried hard to persuade myself that our marriage was simply a question of time. She was enjoying herself—Heaven bless her!—in the bright society which became her so well. It would pass, this childish fit of worldliness. She would be mine after all—after all. Slowly sauntering with my back towards the setting sun I followed my shadow with a curious gaze, watching it gradually advancing before me. As my eyes were fixed on the path, I observed another shadow, rapidly advancing in the same direction as my own—a longer, larger shadow, catching mine with rapid strides. A cloud passed over the sun, and I felt a cold shudder at the sudden withdrawal of warmth and light. A hand touched my shoulder. I almost shrank from it, turned sharply round, and saw—Gilbert Wardlaw! It was a long time since we had met. We were both too busy for keeping up old friendships out of our respective grooves, and they lay far apart indeed. Besides, I had no heart, no time, no thought for anything except my business, and my love. I had no friends at that period of my life; I did not want to have any. I remembered the old feeling sometimes, with vague regret like that which comes over one for one's youth, but which one puts away half contemptuously, and I learned with as much pleasure as anything which did not concern Gertrude could give me, that Wardlaw was "at the top of the tree." If I ever thought of him as a lucky man who could give a woman he might love position, fashion, the entrée to the great bright world of London life, as well as wealth, it was not, I swear, with envy.

"You look ill, Morley," he said, when we had exchanged greetings, and agreed that we had lost sight of each other too much of late. "What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," I protested. "I had a long pull on the river yesterday, and must have taken to rowing a little too late in life, I suppose."

We walked away, arm-in-arm, towards the West-end, and after we had talked awhile on indifferent subjects, the ice of our long severance broke up. I asked him all sorts of questions about himself, and he told me how things were going with him, very freely. Wardlaw was more changed than I was, since the time when he had been my ideal of all that was grand and worthy in manhood. He was now a grave, circumspect, reticent, very gentlemanly, but in no way remarkable, man of forty-three, who had acquired the tone of the best kind of society. I was much, as I had always been, a middle-class person, with no advantage of manners or appearance. That day, for awhile, I think we both felt young again, and were friends once more. We walked into Piccadilly, and turned into the Green-park. When we were out of the crowd, Wardlaw said to me:

"I have something more interesting than all this to tell you. I am not going to live alone in my big house." (He had been telling me of his purchase of the great house in Ingot-gardens, where this poor document will have the honour to reach the fair hands of the lady to whom it is addressed.) "I am going to be married, and I am glad to be the first to tell you the news. You are the first to hear it. It was all settled only yesterday."

I told him, and with truth, that I was delighted to hear it, though the news contrasted with my own ill-luck. After what he had told me, it seemed that a wife was all Gilbert Wardlaw wanted to make him happy. I forgot my own troubles for awhile.

"And the fortunate princess? Who is the Cynthia—handsome or pretty, rich or well born, or all of these together?"

"Not all together. Money I have got. I marry for beauty and for love—not for filthy lucre. That concerns me, and me alone. No taint of dollars poisons my wedding-day."

"A thousand good wishes, my dear Wardlaw. But the lady's name?"

"Her name is Gertrude Ludlow. She is Lady McKayman's niece. You know her, I think?"

With a desperate effort I controlled myself and answered:

"Know her? Certainly. Very charming. Happy man."

"You are not well, Morley. Your voice is quite shaky. You're overworking. Come and dine with me at the Constitutional to-night."

"Thanks, but I am engaged, and must leave you now. Once more—a thousand good wishes."

"Thanks to you. I'll look you up in a day or two. Don't let us lose sight of each other again."

How I reached my chambers I shall never know. The great tall houses seemed to nod and rock on their foundations. My own rooms looked ten thousand times more barren and cheerless than they had ever been before. I gazed into the mirror with a vacant stare. Was this my face? Was it the counterfeit presentment of Henry Morley?

She was false! False to our early love. False even to her proffered friendship, for she had taken no pains to let me know of her new engagement, and had never named Wardlaw in my hearing. She was false as fair, the treacherous pilot to whom I had confided my bark of life—now gone down for ever. Was I to bear this? Was I to see my old hero—how I hated him now!—cross me, and bear off, without an effort, the prize I would have given my heart's blood to win? Was Gilbert Wardlaw to beat me at every turn of the race of life? He was right, after all. While I had been wasting my life in drudgery, whose greatest prize was a competency, he had conquered the world as he had promised to do. He had wealth. He had influence. He knew how to invest for his clients. This was the secret of his success in Hawkley-square. Old Lady McKayman was not the woman to ignore the man who could tell her when to "buy for the rise," and when to sell. He was Fortunatus: the man who could put his aristocratic friends on to the "good things in the City" they are so fond of. Could I believe there was any love in this match? Forbid it, Heaven! Was not the girl's heart my own, despite her levity? No; the truth was evident—too evident. She was marrying him for his money. For his money! Would I not have worked and slaved in good and in evil fortune for her? Would she not have been as the apple of my eye? Might I not ultimately have placed her on a pinnacle far higher than that occupied by the highest financial nobility? She could not wait. She was of the same clay as my rival—my always successful rival. As for him, he had not spared me. This king of Threadneedle-street had taken my ewe lamb from me—a willing victim, it is true, but yet a robbery from me. She had chosen this life, and had left me, the first who had burnt incense at her shrine, to pursue my weary pilgrimage alone, without hope or ambition, with nothing but despair for my companion. Was there not courage in despair? Had I read the grand old story of the Hebrew warrior for nothing? Betrayed, blinded, and mocked; brought in to "make sport," forsooth, for his conquerors; did not he, in his last supreme moment, bring down their gorgeous temple of triumph upon his tormentors? Should I sit down powerless, and moan helplessly over the ruin of my life, or should I not rather bide my time, and wreak my vengeance upon those who had trampled upon me without a thought—who had struck me aside like a worm in their path?

On the morning which succeeded that night of agony I went forth into the world, a changed man. My life was no more a tissue of love and ambition, but a web woven in the darkest colours from the fibres of a desolate heart. It had one object—an object which, as Mrs. Wardlaw will perceive, I have now fulfilled.

I recollect the wedding—the gallant demeanour of the bridegroom, the subdued but singularly collected manner of the bride. I mind me well of the charming air with which she recognised her old "friend;" the conquering-hero bearing of Wardlaw; and I recollect but too well my last struggle with my emotions. Could I only have believed that she loved him, the blow would then have been bitter enough, but I might have found some grain of generosity in a soul not yet entirely corrupt, to turn me from my purpose. But no; I could not, would not, believe it; she had sold herself for wealth, not for rank or position, but for money, and the price of this great fortune was my life. Throughout that never-to-be-forgotten day I felt like the slave behind the victor's car, whose function it was in the day of triumph to cry aloud—"Remember, thou art but a man." My voice, however, was still. The time had not come for me to cry, "Remember." It has come now.

My career at the bar was at once abandoned, and my little property realised. My resolve required my money to be at my disposition at any moment, and, meanwhile, I led an apparently idle life—really spent in studying the minutiæ of commercial speculation. Wardlaw transacted what little actual business I was engaged in. I almost shocked him by my excessive prudence, but, owing to some excellent information of which I became possessed, I soon gave him a high opinion of my talent as a tactician. He gave me credit for commercial genius as one successful venture followed the other, but laughed at my prudence in regularly investing my gains. I was a welcome guest at his house, and was even received by its mistress, with that perfect air of unconsciousness of earlier ties, which only a thoroughly well-bred or completely heartless woman can assume. I can hardly picture to you—for the task is too humiliating—the tortures I underwent on these occasions. Not that I ever flinched from my purpose for an instant. Taking my cue from Mrs. Wardlaw, I appeared to have totally forgotten the love passages between us, and never hinted by look, word, or deed, that we had ever been anything more than mere acquaintances before her marriage with Wardlaw. I became the friend of the house and made the mansion at Ingot-gardens my favourite resort. But on reaching my home in the Albany—I soon gave up the Temple—I gave way to paroxysms of fury which would, perhaps, excite other feelings than sympathy in persons who are incapable of conceiving the effect of a true passion upon a morbidly nervous temperament. Alphonse, my faithful servitor, has found me rolling on the floor in fits of passion, which almost resembled disease, and certainly approached delirium; but with each returning day I became more like my former self, calm, cool, pleasant, and amusing, perhaps, in society: at least, people said so. The weary years rolled on—one, two, three of them. My purpose never faltered. I cultivated the character of a shrewd man of business, and my speculations realised to the letter the French adage. So successful was I at last that Wardlaw one day said to me, "Morley, why are we not partners? With your knowledge and luck, and my business experience, we might do such strokes on the market as would make even the Rothschilds stare."

My opportunity had come at last.

"You don't want a partner, Wardlaw. Besides, you are too big a bird for me to fly with. In my little pottering way I can pick up a thousand now and then, but my style of muddling on would never suit you. I should only clip your wings. It would be tying an eagle to a dodo."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow; don't talk stuff about eagles. This particular bird of prey has been somewhat singed of late. Got too near the sun, I suppose—the feathers have suffered."

"Not much, I hope."

"Not enough to make me hesitate as an honourable man in asking you to be my partner. I am sound enough at present, but I want ballast both in cash and brain. That last affair of the Great Cotopaxi ran me very close, and my nerve is not what it was. Knew a thing about the Congo Loan yesterday, and missed the market for want of jumping in at once. I shall have," he continued, "either to draw in my horns or take a partner. Why not yourself? You would keep things straight."

I looked into his eyes, read their anxious, sincere meaning, and answered:

"Your partner, my dear Wardlaw, would be a happy man, in spite of recent reverses. But if I am to put in my capital, I can't allow you to run a muck with it. You must not operate without consulting me: a week of bad luck on your scale would ruin me. For big operations we must consult."

"With all my heart. Consult as much as you like."

"You know as well as I do the tremendous power of a partner. This is no limited liability company. Each one of us can ruin the other at will. You must take care of me."

"Take care of you, Morley! Why, of course I will. We are, and will be, the lucky men of the day. Have the deeds drawn your own way. Very glad to get your clear head to help me."

My head was very clear as I walked along Piccadilly that night. Long-cherished schemes had at last taken shape, as the foul exhalations of a marsh wreath themselves into ghostly forms. He was mine, then, at last—this eagle, this bird of the sun, this soaring genius of finance. Through what a long and tedious time of watching had I looked for this hour, which put into my hands the destiny of Gilbert Wardlaw, and of the woman who had spurned, mocked, and betrayed me. I held them firmly at last.

I saw Wardlaw in the City next day. He was radiant. We took a "little plunge" in the Congo Loan together, and in four hours made a handsome profit.

"By Jupiter!" said he. "A capital omen—an omen of capital." A poor joke, but gentlemen who gamble in stocks are not remarkable for the highest class of wit.

"Did you say last night," I answered, "that the deeds were to be drawn by my solicitor? You might just as well give your instructions to your own man. You know I depend entirely on you."

"What! after the neat touch on Congo? Oh no. Leave it to you, my friend. By-the-way, should not we buy a little Madagascar?"

"No, I think not. Let well alone."

"You are always right. I will."

The deeds were signed. I was henceforth managing partner in the firm of Wardlaw and Co.—a position which gave me absolute power to deal with the affairs of that house as I would. At that time, Wardlaw, despite his blunders in Cotopaxi Bonds, was in a perfectly solvent condition. Moreover, his credit was unbounded; and the addition to the house of a successful operator like myself increased, if possible, the confidence of our clients.

Facts which came to my private knowledge enabled me to make several happy strokes, and the joy and confidence of my partner increased daily. It chanced one day that I met a certain Captain Barwell. He was an admirable player at every known game, and it occurred to me that he was excellently qualified for a racing commissioner; that is to say, he was the man to back a horse quietly without compromising his patron.

Wardlaw knew and cared nothing whatever about horses. His wife's equipages were famous, even among the splendid equipages of the London beau monde, and, for a lady, she was a good judge of a horse; but her husband neither knew nor pretended to know anything about them. I don't believe Wardlaw ever attended a race in his life; and when, on meeting Barwell, it occurred to me to use him for my own purposes with Wardlaw, it was not with any notion that I could tempt him through a favourite pursuit. That did not matter. A man can gamble in horses who does not know a mane from a tail, and could as easily fly as ride; and in Wardlaw there was the deep and insatiable passion of a gambler. Anything that was a speculation had a charm for him. I don't know whether it was always so: I know it had come to that. This was his sole passion, and through it I had my hold on him.

Wardlaw's first racing investments were lucky; and, indeed, our connection seemed fortunate to both, and we were congratulated by business men in the East and sporting men in the West upon our almost unvarying success. My partner all this time lived right royally. Money was made and spent with equal freedom. Mrs. Wardlaw drove the handsomest horses, wore the best diamonds, bought the most curious and costly china, and refurnished her house in better style than any lady in London; at least, so said old Lady McKayman, who ought to know. I was known everywhere as the brilliant partner of our firm.

The drama was drawing towards a conclusion. As I sat in the Albany, after a quiet rubber at the Darlington, I pondered over the carefully-wrought "situation." Fate had favoured me so far, but longer delay might be fatal to my designs. It was now time to strike.

The house of Wardlaw and Co. was in the enjoyment of a great reputation for courage, skill, and good fortune, when a sudden change came over the character of their undertakings. Hitherto their speculations, if large in amount, had been confined to such shares and stocks as represented real enterprises, but now they extended their operations in every direction. Nothing came amiss to them—loans for the benefit of sham republics and shadowy empires; mines in fabulous ranges of mountains; railways through undiscovered countries; lines of steamships for carrying emigrants from thinly to thickly inhabited kingdoms—any game seemed good enough for Wardlaw and Co. to take a hand at. Still, no disquieting rumours spread in the City till after the opening of the recent London season. The first really great event of the turf was over. The race for the Two Thousand Guineas was won and lost, when the talk of the West-end ran upon the immense sums lost by a City man—name unknown. News of this kind is not long in travelling from Pall-mall to the Stock Exchange, and the name of the loser was sought eagerly for, but the secret was well kept. It is not rare for members of the Stock Exchange, for sober merchants, and for great manufacturers, to lose money on the turf; but the business is so well done through a "commission," that judges and bishops might bet with impunity.

Our next undertaking was a serious one. When the Mozambique Loan came out, Wardlaw and Co. became purchasers to a large, a very large amount. We were on friendly terms with Gonzalez, Aranjuez, and Co., who brought out the loan. So well was the affair managed, that holders of the stock soon showed a handsome profit—on paper—the only difficulty being so to "unload" the stock, as to get rid of it by degrees, without breaking the market and producing a panic. This object is often accomplished with complete success by the simple manœuvre of buying and selling alternately, so as to keep the market steady. One morning Wardlaw, who of late had not often troubled me with his views on large speculations, came down to the office looking ill and harassed—an unusual circumstance with him. On that particular day, however, he was pale and nervous. He began:

"My dear Morley, I don't often interfere, but really this Mozambique business is a very large transaction. We can see a profit; why should we not realise it?"

"Realise it, Wardlaw? You are surely losing your once splendid nerve. It is far too soon to attempt such a thing. It would be killing the goose; and you know it well enough. Besides, we must make a great stroke. We have been hit hard in two or three places of late; and your private account—excuse my mentioning it—has been awful for some time past."

"Oh yes! I know well enough how we stand. Confound the turf; why did not I mind my own business? Well, if you think so, we must continue as we are—bulls of Mozambique. But I wish we were out of it."

"So do not I. The thing will cover all shortcomings; and if you should make another mess on the Derby, there will be money to meet it."

The next day a heavy attack was made upon Mozambiques. Offers to sell were loud and frequent, and the stock declined till the large holders were compelled to buy heavily, in order to prevent the market breaking altogether. In spite, however, of their efforts, quotations fell two per cent., and it was clear that any attempt to work off the stock in the prevailing state of the market would be useless, and worse than useless, as it would simply depreciate it without getting rid of any great quantity. This first exciting day's work was only the prelude to a long series of battles. One day Wardlaw and Co. and their followers would succeed in bringing Mozambiques to the front with a healthy aspect, but on the next came the inevitable attack from an unknown "bear"—operating through various brokers—and down went the loan again. By forcing up the market we could now and then contrive to dispose of a parcel of bonds, but were compelled almost immediately to buy them back again, in order to confront the "bear" influence, which seemed to gather strength as the days wore on. Gilbert Wardlaw was on thorns.

"Let us get out of Mozambiques at any sacrifice; but let us get out and save the ship!"

"The ship? You mean a plank, or a raft, to starve or eat each other upon. Are you mad? Do you recollect how much we lost on the Galapagos Grand Junction the week before last, and what a pleasant settling that was over the Araucaria mess? What are you dreaming about? Mozambiques, and Mozambiques only, can pull us through!"

"Yes! yes! yes!" he answered, tapping his fingers nervously on the table. "I know you think so, but are not you, who used to be always right when you operated for yourself, and during the first year of our partnership, too—are not you, too, getting a little reckless? You see you are a single man. You don't know anything of the great responsibilities of life. If you had a wife, now, you would not care to set everything upon a cast."

I held a keen, sharp-pointed penknife in my hand. I could have driven it into his heart, but as my fingers twitched round the ivory handle, I asked myself if this vulgar vengeance were worthy of Henry Morley. Had I toiled and waited so long for this?—for a vulgar assassination, a revenge I could have taken years ago? Was I going to cut the net I had woven with my own hand? I dropped the knife lazily, and looking full at Wardlaw, said:

"Upon a 'cast!' Why, Wardlaw, your metaphor is ancient. It savours of the married man. You can't 'set' anything upon a 'cast' now. Dice are out of fashion!"

"For Heaven's sake, don't indulge in cheap sarcasm, but listen to me. The risks are not equal. You are alone in the world, with nobody to care for but yourself; but suppose we break over this Mozambique business,. where am I?—where is my wife?"

It would be unnecessary trouble for me to write, and I am quite sure you would not care to read, the arguments by which I soothed and persuaded him to leave Mozambiques to me. They succeeded, and that is all I or you—how sweet to be united in at least one sentiment!—care about.

The autumn was yet far off when my harvest was ripe for the sickle. Day by day I saw the investments of Wardlaw and Co. shrivel up to dry leaves, like the money in the Arabian story. One by one our "bulls" came to the shambles and our "bears" went empty away. Wardlaw could endure it no longer, and would come to me saying, "What is to be done?" "Can nothing be thought of?" But my answer was always to the same effect: "We must stand on Mozambiques, and, I suppose, on the Derby. You have a big book of course. What do you stand to win?"

"A lot on almost everything with a chance. A fortune on what I think—I hope—will prove the winner."

Riper and riper grew the harvest. Wardlaw devoted himself to his equine speculations, and made certain, as he said, of pulling the chestnuts out of the fire. Still the unknown influence continued to "hammer" Mozambiques, till it required immense ingenuity to keep them on the market at all. Bolstered up one day and driven down the next, the loan became the shuttlecock of the Stock-exchange, beloved of rough-and-ready speculators as a "gambling stock"—something on which to turn a more or less honest penny. At last came the day when Wardlaw, sitting with me in the office, got the news of his ruin. The great race had been run. Gilbert Wardlaw was a beggar. The thin bit of paper dropped from his hands; he sprang up from his chair and was gone.

I saw nothing of him till the Saturday morning, when he came to the office looking ten years older than when I had last seen him. I greeted him as if nothing had happened. He dropped into a chair, and said huskily:

"What are we to do? We are in a hopeless mess."

"Not at all. We can, perhaps, see the Mozambiques out yet. They look better this last day or two. I am told of a new arrangement making with the Government. If this is signed, we recoup ourselves for all our risk."

"I hope so, I'm sure," growled Wardlaw; "but hang Mozambiques. What am I to do to meet my Epsom account?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon. When you said 'we,' you meant only yourself. Why should misfortune make you inaccurate? Your horse-racing accounts are your own affair; they do not concern Wardlaw and Co."

"The deuce they don't."

"Not at all. How can they? It would, of course, be very disagreeable to have Mr. Wardlaw's name posted as a defaulter, but that would not ruin the firm."

Gilbert Wardlaw turned deadly pale.

"Why," he stammered, "you don't mean to say that you would let me go down in this way? Posted as a defaulter! What would become of my social position—of my commercial character—of everything and everybody belonging to me?"

"The firm, as I have told you, can just

carry on, and no more. What do you propose? I should be glad to do anything to please you, but I don't see my way."

"Confound it! Could not we sacrifice some Mozambique? We have got plenty."

"Pledged as collaterals, every bond of it."

"Then—then—" and his jaw dropped, "it's all over. But, no! there must be something."

"You have private property."

"Mortgaged, every acre."

"Well, there are resources, of course. You are not the first City man who has been hard put to it. Have you no imagination—no memory? There *are* ways, if you have the courage to tread them."

"You startle me! What do you mean?"

"I cannot help you, but I will do what I can. I will let you help yourself."

"What can you mean? How can I help myself?"

"Our safe is at this moment full of securities belonging to our confiding clients. They are worth a large amount. There is the key. We are partners, and I am responsible for what you do. But never mind. I will not let you go down without giving you a hand. There is the key of the safe."

Wardlaw hesitated.

"I—I—I don't quite apprehend you," he stammered.

"Misfortune, my dear fellow, ought to quicken your wits. It seems to dull them. You might get other securities by signing cheques ad libitum, but that is a short-sighted plan."

"You intimate, then, that I am to take our clients' securities, and sell them on the market to meet my account on Monday?"

"I do not intimate or suggest anything. I merely say that the Mozambique contract will be signed on Monday, and that the bonds will then be above par. If, knowing this, you think your honour, or commercial probity, or whatever you like to call it, will not be compromised by—ah!—borrowing these securities for a few days, you can please yourself. You are, like myself, a partner in the house, and beyond any control of mine. How much is it?"

"About forty thousand pounds."

"You will find plenty, but not much to spare. Do as you like, and ask no more questions. I am going out of town till Tuesday night, and leave you the absolute control of the business. Only one word. When the Mozambiques go up on Tuesday, don't be in a hurry to sell and spoil a great stroke."

"This—this is sailing rather near the wind, isn't it?"

"If we lived in the good old days, I should say it was sailing very near the wind that blew towards Botany Bay." I saw him flinch, the irresolute coward; but the corn was bowing to the sickle, the long-wished-for harvest was fully ripe. "But now, you know, things are ordered differently. Need I recall to you how often City, and, for that matter, other speculative characters 'go for the gloves,' as they call it?"

Wardlaw trembled in every limb. He almost reeled to the cabinet in which wine was kept. He poured out and drank some. The wine steadied him.

"There is," he said, "an awkward flavour of the felon's dock about this, but I have no choice. As for you, my dear Morley, you are a jewel of a partner to stick to your shipmate in weather like this."

"No gratitude, please." At that moment I felt the tenderness of the headsman, as he carefully cuts away the love-locks of his "subject." "But I must catch my train. I leave you in charge. Good-bye till Tuesday, when I dine with you."

"Good-bye, and thank you a thousand times."

My hand was on the door when Wardlaw stopped me.

"The key; you have forgotten to give me the key."

"I am so absent. There it is. Farewell."

"But are you sure about the Mozambiques?"

"I have not the slightest doubt about the signing of the contract. I have it on the best authority. It is certain."

"Then," said Wardlaw, "it is all right."

I left him, went to the station, and booked myself for Paris. My work was nearly done. I had but to hear of the settlement of all great accounts at Tattersall's on Monday to be sure that I had not slipped at the last round of the ladder. On the Monday night I was sitting at dinner in Paris, before a sumptuous repast, given to me by the mysterious "bear" of Mozambique stock—the speculator who had prevented Wardlaw and Co. from realising.

"On Tuesday then," growled Ursus, "the bubble bursts?"

"Not a moment later. The pear is ripe, rotten ripe, and cannot be kept any longer."

A servant brought me a telegram:

"Settling at Tattersall's very good.

One great account, about which fears were entertained, all right. Quite punctual."

The grain was cut, and ready to be carried—whither? The next morning I remained in the Grand Hotel. Telegrams arrived frequently; not from Wardlaw, who believed me in the North of England, but from a private agent:—"Mozambiques opened flat, and were hammered down persistently;" "A panic in Mozambiques: offers to sell all over the house—a fall of twenty per cent.;" "Mozambiques unsaleable. Failure expected of Wardlaw and Co., known to be extensive holders. Great agitation."

What need to linger over details already known—the failure of the great house of Wardlaw and Co.; the appropriation of customers' securities by the partners; the flight of Gilbert Wardlaw (that I confess I did not expect, I thought he would have been taken). For myself, I care nothing; I am beyond the reach of justice and of want; but these are small matters. My work is done—a mean work if you like, but terribly and completely performed. Perhaps an unmanly work to take revenge upon a woman. To me it does not seem so. Trampled to the earth, I have turned and stung. Six years ago Gertrude Wardlaw treated me like a reptile: I have behaved like one. Where is the rich man she preferred to me now?—a bankrupt, a beggar, and a felon, who ran away and left his wife to face her fate alone. My account is closed. I have written it off.

Richard Peveril had perused this document—which contained so much enlightenment for him, as it must have conveyed so much to the miserable man whose deliberate ruin it recorded—with an intensity of interest which for a little while had numbed the sense of suffering in him, and rendered him indifferent to the sounds which arose under the window of his room. They were those of a dispute which was in progress between Tim Denehy, the owner of the public-house, and an elderly, much-bent, gray-haired woman, who, in spite of her age and her stooped back, was tolerably vigorous of voice, and flourished the stick, on which she usually supported herself, with considerable emphasis:

"Och, g' long out o' that, Biddy Sheedy, wid your nonsense!" Mr. Denehy was the speaker. "Don't ye know very well the only horses and carts on th' islant is helpin' wid the corpses? Sure, commin sense might ha' told ye that, woman dear."

"An' what am I to do thin wid the crayture? How is she to be got to the docther? An' am'n't I tellin' ye that my Terry's arm 's broke wid dhragging her first into the boat and thin out iv it; and divil a foot could I stir till this blessid day to come down here to luk for ayther docther or priest, and I not knowin' which o' thim they'd want worst; for who would I lave wid thim to give thim bite or sup, or turn thim in the bed, but Paudheen, the goat, and he'd be the quare nurse tindher. Luk at here now, Tim Denehy, ye'd betther be mindin' yerself, and be lively after th' ass-cart, av it's thruth ye's tellin', and the bastes is helpin' wid the corpses in airnest, or ye'll hear of it from Docther Gossin and Father Pat. They're helpin' wid the corpses, too, I suppose, for I couldn't get sight nor light o' thim. Are ye goin' to harness th' ass-cart thin?"

Mrs. Sheedy cut short her eloquence abruptly, and smote the earth with her stick.

"Och, hold yer whisht," remonstrated Tim Denehy; "can't ye stop yer gosther under the windy where the poor jintleman's frettin' after a sweetheart o' his that's dhrownded? Nice divarshun ye're givin' him! Come in and sit down, and tak a sup o' tay and a dhraw o' the pipe, and I'll put th' ass in the cart in a minnit."

Much mollified, Mrs. Sheedy acceded to this invitation. The noise ceased under Richard Peveril's window; the sound of voices ascended from the common room beneath his, but he heeded neither circumstance;—he was deep in the perusal of the second chapter in the history of Gilbert Wardlaw's ruin.

THE COMMISSIONER'S STORY.

I AM requested to communicate in writing an account of my dealings with the house of Wardlaw and Co., and I look upon this as a fair opportunity of writing an impartial biographical sketch. It is too difficult for me to undertake to separate the man from his deeds. My work is part of me, and, as a biographical notice must appear in the newspapers at my demise, here are a few facts to help the newspaper-fellow, or literary undertaker, who will some day bury me in a neat paragraph. One consolation I undoubtedly have. In looking back at my up-and-down career, I have never done anything unworthy the character of a gentleman of spirit and enterprise. Perhaps I may have sailed just a little too close to the wind now and then, but I was not always captain of the ship I sailed in, and had to act with my superior officers; thus, if anything of a slightly doubtful character should turn up in the course of this true history, the reader will please to recollect that Jim Barwell is one who carries his heart upon his sleeve, and who, thanks to his confiding nature, has, over and over again, been the victim of plotters, who have made use of his honour and reputation to carry out their plans.

When I first joined my regiment (that dashing cavalry corps known as the King's Own Duns), I was—I may say it now that my hair is gray, and my hand trembles of a morning till I have had a glass of sherry—as smart and as good-looking a young fellow, for a light weight, as ever went too fast at his fences, and as great a greenhorn as ever trumped his partner's trick. I had been brought up in the right way to make me soft and trusting in my ways. My mother—the dearest soul in the world!—thought that a public-school life was too much of a scramble for a delicate child, and that the instruction of her particular friend, the vicar, was all that was required to prepare me for the army—as was true enough in the days when officers bought their commissions like gentlemen, instead of reading and studying for them like a pack of schoolmasters. The good old vicar gave me a smattering of Greek and Latin—never of the slightest use, and now completely forgotten—and my poor mother taught me the French she had herself picked up at the various foreign towns in which she resided during my father's time, until he died like a gentleman, with his face to the sky. Captain O'Raff, who went out with him, always declared that Count Tourneleroy fired too soon; and O'Raff was most likely right, for James Barwell the elder could otherwise hardly have missed him altogether. But all this happened when I was very young, and I heard nothing of it from my mother till the day when she read of Count Tourneleroy being run through the lungs by a French newspaper man. A pretty education I got, between a parson and a woman, to fit me for the army, and for taking care of myself at the age of sixteen! Still, I could ride and run, shoot, swim, and speak a little French. They tried to teach me Latin, Greek, and French, but the good souls never thought of teaching me English. Elegance of expression, however, came naturally to me, and I should have done well enough without any instruction at all if it had not been for the confounded spelling. My weakness on this point kept my correspondence down to very narrow limits, for I can tell you that writing with the aid of a dictionary is awful work—dead against the collar. One thing I must own they did teach me—arithmetic, a mighty useful thing to a man who has to hold his own against all comers. There were no examinations or trash of that kind in my time; nor was there any larking or "making hay" in a young officer's room, for the very good reason that a fellow who indulged in "making hay" overnight was likely to be made cold meat of in the morning. We did not fight like coal-heavers in my time, but like gentlemen, as we were. Ours was a smart and fashionable regiment. We whiled away our time in various pleasant ways, for officers had not yet come down to book-learning. We rode and shot pigeons, and played billiards, and now and then—in fact, pretty frequently—took a hand at chicken-hazard. It was a capital school for a young man, but terribly expensive. Fellows were not seldom sold up after a couple of years in the King's Own Duns—quiet little jumping matches in the morning, and high points at whist in the evening, cleaning some of them down to the bone very quickly. I was an awful pigeon at first, and it looked at one time as if the last feather would soon be plucked; but, as it happened, that last feather turned the scale. I was terribly downcast at my ill-luck at play, and, to escape from it, devoted myself to the feminine society of the regiment. This has always been a practice of mine. When a man has lost his money, there is nothing like love to console him.

The major's daughter was a remarkably pretty girl, and, I think, fell in love with me at the Canterdown steeplechases. It was certainly not the masterly character of my jockeyship which impressed her, for she was an admirable horsewoman, and rode gracefully and fearlessly. I think it must have been my sky-blue silk jacket, with lemon-coloured sleeves, which turned her head; and, indeed, if dressing the character could have won the race, I should have won easily, so perfect was my get up. My horse, too, was quite good enough to win if

I had only known it. He was bigger and better-looking than any of the lot, went over his fences like a bird, and might have made mince-meat of the field, had not I been too anxious to show my judgment and talent as a jockey. I was leading them all a merry dance till within three fields of home, when I took what I thought was a judicious pull at Punter, my handsome nag. Punter did not like it, and I had some trouble to get him over the last fence. However, I succeeded in doing so, when all at once I saw Charley Maceman in his battered old jacket at my girths. I knew then I had got my work to do, for Charley was a capital finisher, but he was only on a weedy screw, against which I had laid him the odds—rather liberal odds too—myself. It was a terrible set-to, a regular hard ding-dong race from the last fence to the winning-post. I was riding hard to keep my horse's head in front, and kept the lead to within a few strides of the chair, when out shot Charley on his weed and beat me by the shortest of short heads. I thought I had won till I caught Julia Rookleigh's eye, and by its vexed look knew I had just missed the prize. Julia was two or three years older than myself, and, using the privilege of lovely woman, had rather petted and patronised me hitherto, for the difference between a youth of seventeen and a damsel of twenty is beyond handicapping. She was delightfully sympathetic and all that, and soothed and flattered me till I felt actually glad I had lost. She poured wine, capital champagne it was, and mayonnaise made by her own fair hands, into my wounds, and, as we strolled about the pretty country racecourse, I was not a little proud of the handsome woman on my arm. As the day wore on she became quite confidential, and, in reply to my expressions of admiration, said, "Oh, Mr. Barwell, you are a very gallant cavalier indeed, but you are too rapid altogether. If you really care to gain my affection you must not make the pace so severe. These tactics would have won you the race to-day, but love and steeplechasing are very different matters."

Now, I was vain enough of my jockeyship, but not such a fool as to be blind to the truth that Julia came of a racing family; in fact her father was about as dead a hand as ever I set eyes on. Besides, it is always pleasant to be advised by a pretty woman, and then — there is no obligation to act on her advice unless one chooses. I asked her what mistake I had made in the race.

"You waited too long, Mr. Barwell. Charley Maceman would have beaten any man in the regiment under similar circumstances. In the run in, his experience—and will you pardon me?—skill would beat any non-professional rider. You should not have let him get near you. You let Punter have his head in the race to-morrow, and you will beat everything you ran against to-day. And, Mr. Barwell, I want to back Punter—not for gloves—oh no! for this;" and she pulled out of her glove a crisp bank-note.

"My dear Miss Rookleigh," I protested.

"Nonsense, Mr. Barwell. Pray take the money. I will not allow you to stake for me. And—and—be very careful about your horse till you mount. Pray take care that nobody gets at him. Can you trust your man?"

"I suppose so."

"You must be certain. If you have any doubt, dismiss him at once."

"Do you suspect?"

"I do more than suspect. There will be terrible work in the regiment one of these days, when everybody knows as much as I do."

"You startle me!" I answered. I was easily startled then; but, startled or not, I was not such a fool as to neglect her advice, and I insisted on changing the horse's quarters that very day. Julia Rookleigh's prophecy came off to the letter. Some very good animals were engaged for the great race, for which, previously to our conversation, I had had no intention of starting mine, but I made the pace so hot for them that not more than three were left in it a mile from home, when, making up my mind to be outjockeyed no more, I drove Punter along and fairly came in alone. This was a great stroke. As I had lost all my available cash on the first race, I plunged heavily on this on credit, and landed a sum which rather astonished me. I had never had so much money in my life, and felt—whatever I looked—like Napoleon at Marengo, by Jove! It was a proud moment for me when I handed over her winnings to Julia Rookleigh, and thanked her profusely for her excellent counsel.

"I don't like to set myself up as your monitress, Mr. Barwell, but, as you have made a great success by following my humble suggestions, may I ask you, in the hour of victory, to grant me a favour?"

I felt all over a conquering hero. As my heart bounded at the contemplation of the beautiful girl before me, it thumped against a waistcoat stuffed with a thick roll of bank-notes. This was triumph indeed. I answered as in duty bound:

"My dear Miss Rookleigh! Am I not your slave? Am I not bound to you by dearer ties than those of success?"

"Perhaps," she said, rather sadly; "perhaps; but what I wish you to perform is an act of great sacrifice, requiring some moral courage. Your personal courage I have no doubt of. I want you to renounce cards and dice. At billiards, or on horseback, you can take your own part, or, at least, see the game; at whist and hazard you are—pardon me—at the mercy of your friends."

"I should be sorry to be at the mercy of anybody but your sweet self. But do I then play so badly?"

"On the contrary, you play very well, so far as I am a judge. But if you played whist as well as Deschappelles, or Hoyle himself, you would have no chance with some of the men you play with. I could, but I must not, name them. Nothing but my—my—regard for you could have induced me to say so much. You must spare me further revelations."

I did; and I will spare my reader the love scene which followed. Let him—or, rather, I hope her—conjure up agreeable recollections, and fill in the blank. At threescore I hardly care to write a lot of sentimental stuff, but at the time my heart was as full as my pocket. As I lit my cigar and sauntered homewards, I tried to realise my position. Financially I was sound enough, but I did not then fully appreciate the value of money; nor did I know that, in spite of what poets, and novelists, and writing-fellows generally, may shriek about mental agony, the most horrible mental—and, for that matter, physical—tortures can be borne philosophically if combined with a good balance at your bankers. A man may lose his friends: he can make new ones, who don't bore him with the old stories he is tired of. He may be crossed in love; but no man worth his salt was ever ruined by that accident. He may break down in his career: he can begin another, if he only have money to go on with. All the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that the player-fellow talks about, are nothing compared to being hard-up in a strange town, with only the price of a bill-stamp in your pocket, and not a soul in the world to put his name to it. But I did not know all this then. My mind was curiously confused between love and play. I loved the rattle of a dice-box better than an alderman loves the clink of his knife, and every fresh pack of cards had a new beauty of its own. Could I, after just winning a great stake, suddenly throw up the cards without giving a reason for it? What would Charley Maceman, and Captain Tremaine, and Major Rookleigh himself, say? I should be branded as a greedy hunks—as a fellow who had first cleaned out the regiment, and then sat down to slowly gorge his plunder like a pike. This could not be endured. On the other hand, even if I detected them in correcting fortune, how should I stand, as a young cornet, against my superior officers, and what chance should I have of a fair hearing? Besides, I guessed that the chief culprit was Major Rookleigh himself; and was I to overwhelm with disgrace the man whom I hoped to call my father-in-law? I could, of course, exchange into another regiment, or ask for leave; but either of these expedients would take me far away from Julia, and neither would look well in the eyes of the King's Own Duns, who would be burning for their revenge. At length I hit on a happy solution of the difficulty. I would ask Major Rookleigh for formal permission to pay my addresses to his daughter. I never dreamt of refusal, of course; and, as an engaged man, could reasonably refuse to play. I would marry, exchange into another regiment, get quit of the Duns for good and all, and live happy ever afterwards. To my amazement, I was met by a quiet and courteous, but firm refusal.

"My young friend," said he, "my daughter shall never marry a gambler, not if he were as rich as you are poor. Besides, I have distinct views for her. A cousin of hers will shortly be of age, and inherit immense property. He is in love with Julia, and the marriage shall take place without delay. Our branch of the family sorely needs a marriage to bring some money into it. I will speak to Julia, and she will tell you her decision."

It is needless to dwell upon my interview with Julia. She had not expected to be hurried like this out of "her pleasant dream," as she called it. It was unfortunately necessary that her father's plans should be carried out. He had explained to her the position of his affairs, and it was so desperate as to leave her no choice but to obey him. Her father had never explained himself so clearly before to her, but there was more than ruin hanging over him—there was dishonour. We must give up our short-lived dream. Could I forgive and pity her? I offered to surrender all my winnings if they would help her father, but she said, with a sad smile, that my little capital would be only a drop in the ocean of his liabilities. The blow hurt me, I confess, and produced a foolish feeling of recklessness. If Julia was lost, why should I care whether I played or not. Play? Yes; I would play on, but for small stakes, keeping well on my guard. My vigilance was rewarded with but little success, while my cautious tactics provoked remark. When I lost, I paid my money with a quietly contemptuous air, which provoked Major Rookleigh, and produced a certain effect upon Tremaine and Charley Maceman. These three were evidently the confederates who plucked the young birds among them, but they were so skilful that detection seemed impossible. Rookleigh, who was the best tactician of the set, saw that things could not go on long as they were, and determined to take the bull by the horns. He persuaded me to run up to town with him for a few days, and made my stay there as pleasant as it could be to a young man of my tastes. We made several sporting ventures together, and were remarkably lucky in that direction, and, if we could only have let hazard alone, should have made a good thing out of our trip. One evening he opened out concerning the regiment. I was excessively guarded in my remarks, but said at last that I could not, and would not, play with the certainty of losing. "Why should you?" asked he, looking not at me, but at his bumper of claret. "You are clever, and, what is more, lucky. Why not come to an understanding, and let us live harmoniously together?" I had dined liberally and had won a handsome stake that day by following the major's advice, so I could not very well throw him out of window; and, to make a long story short, we came to an agreement. I don't want to be misunderstood. I never "secured an honour" or used a "despatch die" in my life. I would scorn the action as one more worthy of a conjurer than a gentleman. I was the walking gentleman of the party. I kept play up to a high standard, my winnings and losings being carried to the general account, and when our "subjects" ran short of money, I could give them a hint where to get a bill done in a friendly way, without going to the Jews. It may be thought odd, that when Julia married her rich cousin, the major did not give up that kind of thing for good and all; but I soon discovered that, after settling his father-in-law's liabilities to the last farthing, the head of the Rookleigh family was indisposed to loosen his purse-strings to his expensive relative. He was a confounded prig, that fellow—born about a quarter of a century before his time—with a fancy for literature and the arts, and old ruins and rubbish, instead of that fine taste for horseflesh and claret which is the stamp of a true gentleman. It may be imagined that he had little sympathy with his father-in-law. How, indeed, could a cold-blooded animal, who put water in his wine when he drank any at all, wore blue spectacles, and had never "jumped up behind" a friend's bill in his life, be expected to hob-nob sociably with our major, whose nose was of a hue seldom seen nowadays?

Julia—poor thing!—did what she could for her father out of her pin-money; but what was an occasional "pony" to a man who liked his twenty port, and plenty of it, with a bottle or two of Lafitte to follow? So the poor old boy was obliged to keep "in practice" as he called it, and a fine life we had of it for many a year, till one day a new man exchanged into the regiment. He was no chicken, this fellow, and had seen the world by the time he got his troop and came to us. He was a man of no family—the son of a tradesman, I believe—and how he got into the army in the good old times puzzles Jim Barwell to this day. But there he was, a quiet fellow enough, and not bad at bottom, as the sequel will show. He was a capital écarté player, and had some stiff bouts with Tremaine, but, of course, got the worst of it. One night, however, he brought down a friend, who backed him and lost, and the next night he introduced another friend, who caught out Tremaine—as plump as you please—with a king "secured." There was a scene, of course, but the new man behaved very well. He said he did not want any scandal—the whole thing had better be kept quiet for the good of the service, but his money must be returned, and Tremaine, "with," he added, "anybody who sympathised with him," had better leave the regiment. We washed our dirty linen at home, as Napoleon said, and the upshot of the whole was that the major, Tremaine, Charley Maceman, and I left the regiment, and no more was heard of the matter.

To tell the truth, I was not very sorry. My mother was dead, poor good soul! She worshipped me to the last, and never refused me a hundred in her life, and I had inherited what little money I had left her to leave. This, with the proceeds of my commission, gave me a small but compact capital to begin the world anew with, and I made up my mind that, as I was now of mature, not to say middle, age, I would wash my hands of the old "practice" for good and all, and try the City. Times had changed, and it was no longer thought derogatory to an officer and a gentleman to try his hand at stocks and companies, and my knowledge of arithmetic, kept fresh and strong by the constant calculation of the odds, would serve me admirably in my new life.

In the course of my experience I assisted in launching many enterprises, which, if not highly remunerative to the shareholders, paid me at least very well. I was by turns secretary to the Timbuctoo and Sierra Leone Railway, a magnificent project, which had only one disadvantage, that of being before its time; promoter and managing director of the Tidal Wave Timber Company, for utilising the wave power of the sea in working saw-mills; a director of the Transandine Balloon Company, for bringing the Eastern and Western Seaboards of South America into close connection, by means of aerial navigation; and chairman of the Galapagos Islands Company, for discovering and raising the treasures deposited by the buccaneers. Had my best inspirations been accepted by the public, I should now be a rich man, but, unfortunately, they selected my weakest plans for adoption, and the consequence was, that most of my companies came at last under the operation of the Winding-up Act. While enjoying the position of a promoter, I was, of course, obliged to live in good style, and I think I may say, without fear of contradiction, that my dinners and my wine were as good as money could buy, but the worst of this was, that I became no richer. Still I held my own, and had lived for several years pleasantly and handsomely, without touching a farthing of my capital, a pack of cards, or a betting-book, when I became acquainted with an eminent City man who was my ruin. He laughed at my puny efforts, which, after all, kept me well, at other people's expense, and represented to me how, from as small a capital as mine, he had risen to wealth and importance. I listened to him. My confiding nature betrayed me into the mistake of speculating with my own money instead of that of others—a fatal error. For a time all went well, and the quickness with which I made money induced me to laugh, like my new friend, at little peddling transactions, and I extended my operations, by his advice, at the very time I should have drawn in my horns. Then came a panic, when big galleons and little cockboats went to Davy's Locker in company. Wardlaw, like a skilful pilot, brought his own ship into port safe and sound, but mine was hopelessly shattered. Everything went—my natty little house in Belgravia, my ready money, my horse and brougham—every stick I was possessed of, and there was I left without a stiver. What on earth was I to do? At such a time as that I could not begin again in the City on nothing. I had given up my profession, I was fifty years old, and had always been accustomed to live like a gentleman. A nice problem for a man in middle life, who ought to be above the world and to have means to bring his friends around him. This was Wardlaw's doing. That man had brought my gray hairs to poverty! As I was walking down St. James's-street, cursing him with all my heart, I almost plumped into the arms of Major Rookleigh, stepping out of a handsome phaeton—a capital turn-out, not showy, but quiet, and in the best possible taste. Rookleigh was looking very little older than when we left the old regiment—just a little gouty, perhaps, about the feet and a shade redder in the nose, but as fresh and as hearty as ever. He was dressed to perfection—just enough behind the fashion to become his years. As for me, I had long since adopted a severe style—very different from the jaunty costume of the King's Own Duns. Rookleigh was delighted to see me.

"Thought you buried in the City, Barwell. Not seen you for years. Hope you've grown rich as well as respectable."

"Not very. Glad to see you in such good case. Have you outlived your son-in-law and taken the whole pool?"

"Not at all. My daughter and her husband are living in Florence, and are, no doubt, enjoying high art to their heart's content. By-the-by, she has become infected with a mania for pottery and artistic costume, and instead of the pretty girl you recollect, looks as great a guy as if she were an artist's wife—which, thank Heaven! she is not."

"Well, but yourself?"

"I! my dear fellow. What is that Latin stuff—'Si monumentum,' &c.—look at me and my belongings. All paid for, parole d'honneur. Never in better feather in my life."

"How is this. Run of luck, eh? More than I have had in the City."

"Luck, my dear Barwell? Luck! Nonsense; surprised to hear this from you—a pupil of my own. Skill, genius, the art of combining things so that two and two make five."

"I begin to see; but I thought all this kind of thing was stopped?"

"What the devil are you talking about?" snorted Rookleigh, apoplectically; "do you imagine I am keeping a common gaming-house?"

"Heaven forbid!" I answered; "but there is only one way of doing your sum that I know of."

"Rubbish! There are hundreds of ways of doing anything or anybody. Come and dine with me to-night."

To be candid, I was glad to dine anywhere out of the ken of City people. The confounded place had ruined me; I wanted to hear no more of it, and felt for a moment quite young again at finding myself under the wing of the hospitable major.

He was living in a style that I may describe as the quiet and costly. His house was small and snug, but it was by no means a poky little hole. It was situate, too, in Mayfair, the most delightful part of London to my taste. His pied-à-terre, as he called it—Rookleigh was always uncommonly fond of airing his French—was like his phaeton, like his brougham, like all that belonged to him—a model of good taste, rich and fashionable, but severely subdued, not to say stern, in character. At the time I speak of, the high-art style of thing had hardly come into fashion; and, provided that a gentleman's house was well mounted, and his dinners good, people were satisfied, and did not require any particular tone, or feeling, or age, to be represented. The dinner was admirable—the dishes few in number, but each perfect of its kind, and accompanied by its proper wine. Rookleigh prided himself on this elegant simplicity, and was never tired of quoting the famous gourmand who could dine on four plain dishes—clear turtle, chicken-turbot, haunch of venison, and apricot tart—a good dinner, too, by Jove! and not cheap either. This was the kind of thing Rookleigh aimed at, and achieved. The company was hardly so carefully selected as the food and the wine. Not that any downright disreputable person was admitted; far from it; Rookleigh always kept to the highest rank of his profession, and looked down on a vulgar practitioner as the Chancery Bar looks down on the Old Bailey; but the party seemed oddly made up of young and old. There was old Sir John Bluffe, who ate a great deal and said very little; young Silberschmidt, of a great banking family; Henry Morley, a City man; the Honourable Algernon Peregrine, Lord Eaglebridge's eldest son, a handsome fair-haired youth, but too fond of Kümmel; Mr. Crackleton, who said some good things, by Jove!—wish I had put them down—and Mr. Howard Sharkey, the well-known financial agent. These, with the major and myself, made up the company—Rookleigh never could endure more than eight at dinner—"spoilt the whole thing" he said, by cutting the company in half. It was very pleasant. The talk ran on everything, from the bank-rate to the ballet, but without anything horsey or sporting about it. After the first cigar, however, the company was increased by my old friends Tremaine and Charley Maceman, who dropped in for half an hour; and later in the evening came young Sparkshaw, the son of some coal or iron man up in the North, dead not long before, leaving Sparkshaw rolling in money. On his arrival I heard cards mentioned for the first time. He had evidently been dining, and was burning to play, but Rookleigh talked to him like a regiment of parents and guardians. "Too late to begin," said the major; "and, besides, what chance would you stand after eating—I won't say drinking—so much? I can't allow any cards to-night." Sparkshaw expostulated, but Rookleigh was firm.

"You know I promised our friend Harebrook to take care of you, and I'll keep my promise, by Jove! If you will play at cards, you may play somewhere else, but not to-night in my house," and Sparkshaw dwindled away pretty soon after—a poor, half-bred creature I could see, not able to carry his liquor like one of the good old stock. I have noticed that that kind of person very seldom can. I must say I admired the major; he played his part to perfection. Of course I had no doubt, after seeing Tremaine and the other come in, that all this neat establishment must mean play—high play—and not on the square. That was clear enough to me. The host gave me a quiet hint to stay the company out, and when the last had dropped off he brought out a bottle of old arrack punch, and began:

"My dear Barwell, I did not ask you here to-night for nothing. I knew all about the collapse in the City. I dropped a little over it myself, and knew that you were hit hard and full. You see my style of life. Shall I let you into the secret? I may just as well do so, for you were not, as a boy, to be treated to half-confidences, and would hardly listen to them as a man. The secret of my success is that I never touch a card myself before witnesses, and never book a bet except, perhaps, a 'pony' at the post. None of the young men of the day can say that I ever won their money of them. On the contrary; you saw that fool to-night: I take care of him and protect him so far as I can."

"I see you are his adviser—his young man's best companion. You save him his hundreds, and you cost him his thousands. I grasp the position."

"Just so. I see you are as bright as ever. I take care of the fast youth. When he gets into trouble, I get him out of it; when he is hard up, I help him, or, rather, find somebody to do so. They play at cards here, now and then, of course; but not I—individually: it is as much as I can do to look after my guests. When they adjourn to Tremaine's rooms they can play as high as they like; but I don't suffer heavy play here. No, no. Whatever may happen, I stand clear of all risk. A clever man, my dear Barwell, lives by the industry of others. Tremaine and Charley Maceman are my executive officers. I should never think of asking you to take a similar position; but I can offer you a hand worth playing if you like to take it."

"At what game?"

"I will try to explain. You saw Henry Morley here to-night—a clever fellow and a good fellow, but not the man to play our game upon. A bird of prey himself, or I'm mistaken. He wants a confidential commissioner to do some work for him or his friends on the turf. The man must be discreet and able. There is no question of credit. I can put you on with the men to work it out in detail; but your principal's name must never be uttered, even in your dreams. You must stand between the City men and their smaller agents. I can give you every facility in the way of admission to the sporting clubs. If this is not a good speculation for us, I am much mistaken. Will you act?"

As my available capital, at that moment, was considerably under a hundred pounds, I accepted of course. And why should I not have accepted? Was I to close my mouth against the ortolans which were flying into it, just when it had appeared likely to want bread and cheese? Besides, what was there in the slightest degree ungentlemanlike in the situation? Henry Morley, or any other broker, would execute my commissions on the Stock-exchange, if they thought me a safe client. Why should not I execute theirs in another place? Over the arrack punch the major and I had a long and pleasant chat over old times, and under its influence his bitterness towards his son-in-law melted down considerably.

"I don't want anything of him, confound him!" he roared, good-naturedly enough, "but the miserly hound might acknowledge one's existence now and then. And to think I taught him to ride—and ride he can, like an angel in picklejars. Never sported silk, though. I never could bring him to the front anyhow."

"Perhaps he did not want to break his neck, and let you step into thirty thousand a year, Rookleigh, eh?"

"Barwell, old friend, never attribute motives. It is unparliamentary, and, if any other man but yourself had done it, I should say, ungentlemanlike. Good-night. Take luncheon with me to-morrow, and meet Morley."

Major Rookleigh was correct in his estimate of Morley—a fine fellow, no doubt, but without spontaneity of manner. To my practised eye he was obviously—too obviously—on his guard. "Our friend Rookleigh has advised me to consult you as to some investments on the turf. He tells me that I may rely absolutely upon Mr. Barwell's tact, knowledge, and discretion. Is this so? Can I rely upon my commissioner actually holding his tongue? I know there is a species of freemasonry in every craft, and that is my reason for seeking assistance from a gentleman not involved with any clique of what are called sporting characters. I want your help in doing—please follow me—more than merely backing horses, 'getting the money on' as it is called—anybody can do that—I want you to 'get it off,' sometimes—do you understand?"

"Perfectly; but I must establish a large credit to do this."

"Not at all. The first time you lay ten or twenty thousand pounds against a horse for me—in your own name, mind; if the takers hesitate, as they will hesitate, offer to stake the money; I will supply you with the means. This need only be done once, and your reputation will be as high as that of any man in the ring. They will all be anxious to do business with you. The possessor of twenty thousand pounds in ready cash is a solid man as times go."

"I follow you completely. You not only know of horses who are likely to win, but of horses who are sure to lose—who will not even run for the money. I understand exactly."

"More than this. As we on the Stock-exchange can finance, as it is called, a speculation, and make a market for ourselves, so can you—if you manage it well, and employ the right men—make a market for a horse. You can drive him to long odds when he is galloping like a lion, and you can make him a favourite when he has only three legs to go upon."

"I see, Mr. Morley, that you know what you are talking about. I shall be glad to undertake the management of your business when you please."

It was a pleasant connection. Things turned out exactly as Morley had predicted. The first time I made an attack upon a popular favourite for a great race, and, instead of offering the odds in modest "ponies" or "centuries," tried to lay them in "monkeys," I noticed that backers who had taken shorter odds of other people hesitated to take them of me. But I knew my game, and offering to stake the twenty-five thousand pounds there and then, pulled the bank-notes out of my pocket and flung them down on the table. The scene was a pretty one, and established Jim Barwell's credit solidly enough. This went on for some time, to the mutual profit and content of Morley, the major, and myself. We had many chances on our side. Morley "knew something;" he was wonderfully well informed, and had plenty of capital; and with practice I learned how to make a market perfectly. Once more I was established in snug quarters of my own, and felt that I had at last drifted into a lucrative and pleasant line—far pleasanter than working in the City, where some of the fish are big enough to break through any net. I was prospering exceedingly, when Morley said to me one day:

"I should like to introduce you to my partner. A clever man—a very clever man, with whom I have only recently joined fortunes. You may know him—at least, by name—Gilbert Wardlaw."

"Too well. His advice was my ruin."

"My friend, you should never have asked his advice. He is not supposed to be a speculator. It is you who gave the orders: he merely saw them carried out for you."

I looked at Morley. I need hardly say I did not wink or poke him in the ribs. I would not permit any man living to take such a liberty with me, nor would I indulge in vulgar familiarity myself. I simply gazed into his eyes, with the glance of simple incredulity which always brings people to their bearings, when they try to impose on me.

"Of course," assented Morley, "that is the theory. The practice is a very different thing. You should return good for evil," he continued with a queer smile. "Wardlaw lost your money for you. Now you make some for him; but please recollect that his account and mine are entirely distinct. I think I know something about racing. He knows absolutely nothing, and cares nothing. I don't believe he ever saw the Derby in his life, and has certainly never been seen on a racecourse since his marriage. He is a model husband; devoted to his wife, and so on. But I have told him what a good thing the turf is in the hands of a bold speculator. I have helped him to one or two good strokes, and now he must take care of himself, or, rather, you must take care of him. He knows nothing about horses, and will depend very much upon the information you supply him with. So far as he is concerned, I believe the game of race in the drawing-room, with thousands on instead of counters, would suit him just as well as any course in England."

"I hate unsympathetic people," I replied, "and I detest Wardlaw; but if you desire me to serve your partner I will do so out of regard to yourself."

"Out of regard to your own self, Mr. Barwell, and for your own profit, you will supply Mr. Wardlaw with such turf information as I give you for that purpose.

You will take your tone from me, if you please, and tell him as I tell you, without using my name."

"And I am to understand that your accounts are entirely distinct?"

"Entirely. In fact, if you ever speak of me to Wardlaw after I reintroduce you to him, speak of me as an occasional better, and only to a small amount."

"I don't see, Mr. Morley, exactly what you are driving at."

"No more did you see why you were backing that rotten favourite the other day; until you saw that much more money was got out of him than you invested. I like to give you my confidence fully, but I cannot unfold my mind to you before I have made it up myself."

This was all I could get out of Morley. I cracked my brains and a bottle of the best dry sherry in England, trying to fathom what he meant. I was to take my cue from Morley, inform Wardlaw, and then act for him as he directed; Morley keeping entirely in the background. By Jove! I had it. Morley intended to put the double on his partner, bring him to grief, and capture the whole business for himself. This was treachery—villany of the deepest dye. If I had not hated Wardlaw, and owed him one, my heart would have risen against it. "Confound it," I thought, as I was dressing in my comfortable rooms, "this is horrible. Partner against partner. Dog eating dog!" I strolled along Piccadilly, turned up Albemarle-street, and crossed Lansdown-passage on my way towards Rookleigh's quarters, where I was to dine. The more I thought of the job the less I liked it, but yet I asked myself, why should I hesitate? It was not my fault that, if there was honour among thieves, there was none among stock-jobbers. "After all," I concluded, as I knocked at Rookleigh's door, "what does it matter to me? There's six of one and half a dozen of the other. What scoundrels these tradespeople are!"

A few days later I was reintroduced to my old adviser, Wardlaw, at a City Club, of which he and his partner were members. I had proposed the Pigtail as a rendezvous, but Morley told me that cart-horses would not draw his severe partner to a place where people betted heavily on the odd trick. Wardlaw was very pleasant in his manner, knew me again directly, and spoke feelingly about the hard times of the panic, and I naturally did not explain my feelings towards him. I have always believed, and will maintain now, that free open-hearted candour is essential to the character of a true gentleman, but I do not pretend that one is bound to exhibit all one's weak points to the enemy—and as an enemy I regarded the agreeable, but rather too patronising, Wardlaw. I soon took the measure of my new chief: he was a theorist, a man of systems and crotchets. I daresay his system of bearing stocks, which were rotten in themselves, answered well enough, so long as he met no "bulls" strong enough to corner him; but this was a different thing to betting wildly against a horse over whom he had no absolute control; but he was convinced that the system which succeeded in one place would be equally sound if carried into another. I have seen many of these systematic speculators in my time. All of them won now and then, and heavily, but their systems generally ruined them in the long run. Why, I have seen fellows at Baden and Homburg, in the good old times, and only the other day at Monaco, addling their brains over books of averages—making a toil of a pleasure, and losing their money into the bargain. A wretched set of blunderers, who could not, or would not, see that no system can beat the steady percentage of the bank, any more than the best brains in the world can help a man on the Stock Exchange or the turf, unless he really knows something, not of what has been, but of what is about to be done. He played a sort of martingale against the favourites. His ignorance of horseflesh was, as Morley had told me, something wonderful, even for a half-bred fellow. He seemed to think they were mere machines, to be worked at will. Nevertheless, he, like all gamesters doomed to ruin, began well. By his orders I laid against the prominent favourites early in the season, and he won considerably, but on the first great three-year-old race he came to terrible grief. The settling was awful, but the money was forthcoming, and I cared about little else. On the Derby he made me make for him what I should call the worst book I ever saw in my life, and so it turned out. When the winner's number went up, Mr. Wardlaw had lost forty thousand pounds!

I am always open and above-board, and I do not mind owning that I felt a little anxious about the settling. I had won considerably of late, and had landed a nice stake on the race; but, if anything went wrong with Wardlaw, I was in an awkward position. On Saturday night I got a note from my client, telling me to come to him on Monday morning and receive the amount of his losses.

Jim Barwell is not an impressionable person, I flatter myself, but I was horror-struck at the appearance of Wardlaw. The man was visibly aged, and his features wore an extraordinary look, as if he had committed a murder or some other crime.

"Very hard luck," was all I could find to say. He went to the safe, and was some time before he could open it, his hand shook so frightfully. At last it opened, and he counted out to me forty crisp bank-notes of a thousand pounds each. I drew a deep breath of relief, and pocketed them. Poor devil! he looked so thoroughly ill, I was anxious to be off; and when I got out of his office I felt as if I had stepped out of the Morgue. I think "the talent" were rather glad that day when I put in an appearance and settled all round.

Whatever Henry Morley wanted was achieved, that was certain, and I went to dinner with the clear conscience of one who has done his work well. The next morning I went to call on him, but found he was out of town, and later in the day heard of the panic in Mozambiques, and the failure of the house. On Wednesday, Wardlaw had vanished, no one knew where, and by degrees the whole murder came out. The funds to pay my Derby settling had been raised on the securities of clients by Wardlaw himself, and the fall of Mozambiques had exposed the whole affair and ruined the house.

I talked it over with the major, who was beautifully pathetic on the occasion, and drank a great deal too much arrack punch to my health, in congratulating me on getting so well out of a disagreeable scrape.

As for Wardlaw, I know no more than anybody else what has become of him, and, speaking as a man of the world, I cannot say I very much care. He ruined me, and flung me back into my old life. I have had the pleasure of assisting in his final demolition. We are quits!

"It's ready, is it?" said Mrs. Sheedy as she rose, reluctantly, after about ten minutes had elapsed, and shaking the ashes from the short pipe she had been sociably smoking, deposited it in a corner of the hearth for the use of the next comer. "God knows ye broke yer heart wid hurry, Tim Denehy, and me crawlin' up from th' other end of th' islant to get ye to come for a customer.—Mrs. Denehy, ma'am," continued Mrs. Sheedy, addressing her hostess with marked politeness, and in a totally different tone, "Av a good armful of sthraw, an' a taste of a blanket, an' the weeniest ould pilla could be spared, the cryature 'd come down aisier in the cart, for she's mighty wake. She couldn't sit up sthrait av it was to get the Bishop's blessin' itself."

"Dear, dear! see that now," said the good Mrs. Denehy, as she collected the required articles; Tim venturing meantime to remark that, "not bein' a haythen," he had already filled the bottom of the cart with straw. "To be sure it's a poor case to be dhragged out of the salt say; but what 'ud ail them all to stay at home, and not be goin' in thim murdherin' ships?"

"Come on, now, av ye're comin'," said Tim Denehy; "and do you, Mary, agra, keep a eye out for the docther; he'll be up by-'n-by, when the work is done, and maybe he'd look round by the time I'm back wid the poor thing."

Mrs. Sheedy climbed, with Tim's assistance, into the little cart, and it creaked away. As the sound died in the distance, Mrs. Denehy went out to tell the neighbours on what errand Mrs. Sheedy had come from the lonely fisherman's cabin at the other end of the island, where she lived with her son Terry.

"And so that is the end," said Richard Peveril, half aloud, and he replaced the second manuscript in the box, handling it carefully, because it was in his dead love's writing. His dead love! Her image came again freshly before him, and he flung himself once more on his bed, and buried his face in his arms in a new access of unbearable grief.

DAVY'S LOCKER.

It was quite dark when Mrs. Denehy, remembering that the strange gentleman had eaten nothing since morning, ventured to knock at the door and suggest "the laste taste in life of something which would be nourishin' agen the frettin';" but receiving no answer, she entered the room, and found it all in darkness. Richard Peveril was once more sleeping from very weariness. She retreated quietly down the steep ladder-like stairs, and regained the kitchen.

After a while the creaking of the wheels of the cart was again audible, and Mrs. Denehy tidied the hearth, lighted a dip candle on the window-sill, and another on the wooden chimney-shelf, set the door open, and peered out into the cold stillness of the winter evening. She was alone; the habitual frequenters of the place were down on the beach, and the servant-girl, who was her factotum, had been despatched in search of Dr. Gossin, when Tim Denehy's cart stopped at the door.

"Is that yerself, Tim? And is she wid ye?"

"Bedad, she is, and I wish she wasn't, for if she's only saved from the say to die in th' ass-cart it'll be a bad job, and divil a taste of life there's in her this half-hour. Is there no one to help wid her but yerself, Mary? Where's Bride?"

"Gone for the docther. Don't mind, Tim, we'll manage her atween us. Neddy'll stand."

"Oh, yis, Neddy'll stand. Sorra a much else he's did since he left Terry Sheedy's. Is the bed ready?"

"Ready and waitin', wid clane sheets, and a whisky-jar full o' boilin' wather in it. Come, my jewel, lane on me thin, and on Tim there. That's it; sure ye'll be elegant immaijetly."

With these encouraging words Mrs. Denehy aided her husband to lift out of the cart the almost senseless figure of a woman, wrapped in some heterogeneous coverings, of which a blanket formed a portion. They carried her into the house, a mere helpless burthen. She gave no sign of life beyond a low moan, and when they laid her on the clean bed in a little room hardly bigger than a cupboard, beyond the kitchen, even that ceased. Tim Denehy and his wife looked at her and at each other in alarm. The seemingly lifeless figure, in its shapeless clothing, fastened round it under the blanket with a fisherman's belt, was so gaunt and limp, the deathly-white face, with sunken temples and wasted cheeks, was so sad and terrible! A coarse linen cap, with a huge frilled border, the cherished property of Mrs. Sheedy, covered the head and partially hid the thick masses of raven-black hair, of which a few locks had escaped.

"Tim, Tim, she's dyin', or she's dead!" whispered Mrs. Denehy to her husband. "I wish to the Lord the docther was here. Look at the blue lips of her, Tim darlint, they're awful."

"I'll go for the strange jintleman," said Tim; "he'll be knowledgeable, an'll tell us what to do till Bride brings the docther. Keep the hot wather to her feet, Mary, and rub her hands."

"I will, Tim, I will, and I'll say my prayers like mad too, for I'm sure she's goin'."

"Could I spake to yer honour?" said Tim Denehy, opening the door of Richard Peveril's room and peeping in. "It's all dark! (Mary, Mary, hand up the light here! Now go back to her, alanna.) I beg yer pardon, sir"—he shook Richard by the shoulder, and he started up—"but there's a young woman below, and we're frightened that she's goin'. She's one of the wrecked corpses, sir, only she was not dhrowned all out; and Terry Sheedy the fisherman, sir, at th' other end iv th' islant, picked her up in the say and tuk her home in his boat; only he couldn't come and tell it, sir, by raison iv breakin' his arm; an' it's only to-day his ould mother's come down, sir, an' I wint up wid th' ass-cart, and we have her below now; but the docther can't be got, and we're afeard she's goin'. An' if ye'll come and look at her, sir, we'll be thankful to ye."

Richard Peveril got off his bed with only an imperfect and confused notion of what had been said to him. Of what was required of him he had a still more vague idea; but he followed Tim, who carried the dip candle, down the ladder-like stairs, across the kitchen, and into the little room where the figure lay upon the bed, with Mrs. Denehy on her knees beside it, rubbing the chill hands, and, as she had promised, saying her prayers "like mad."

That figure was not so lifeless as before. The head, in its grotesque covering, was turned towards Mrs. Denehy, and the large sunken black eyes were open, gazing vacantly at the woman's face, down which unconscious tears were streaming.

"This way, sir," said Denehy. "Mary, the jintleman's come; and he'll tell us, quite an' aisy——"

But the gentleman, catching sight of the large sunken black eyes, flung himself on his knees beside the bed, and cast his arms wildly about the helpless figure, with a wild cry of "Florence! Florence!"

Mrs. Denehy jumped up.

"Lord save us!" she cried; "he's gone mad!"

"The saints be praised!" said Tim, looking back into the kitchen. "Here's Docther Gossin and Father Pat, and Captain Craven; and av he is gone mad them three'll be able for him."

* * * * *

"I not only brought his full confession," Florence told her betrothed lover, when—not so many hours afterwards, as people who do not know the resuscitating power of happiness might suppose—she was sufficiently recovered to tell him her story in feeble whispers, while his head lay close to her lips as he knelt beside her, "but I brought back the papers themselves. He had not used them, partly because he had not had time, but also because he was seized with remorse when the deed was done. He knew, the morning after, that the sum he could raise on them would be quite unavailing, and your ruin vain. If he could have found a pretext, a possibility, he would have replaced them; but there was none, and he carried them about with him. At the last moment, when I detected him in his flight, he had not presence of mind to put them into my hands; indeed, he forgot them. But he meant to give them to me when he bade me bring 'her' to him. And he told me to ask you to forgive him. I said I knew you would. Oh, Richard! the miserable, miserable creature that he is in his solitude, his banishment, and his remorse! They need never want to punish him more than he is punished. The papers were in the box, with the copies I made of those cruel documents which told us all the truth. You must read them some day, Richard. But, when we were a little while at sea, I got nervous about their safety. The weather was bad, stormy, and dangerous; and the notion that we should be shipwrecked took possession of me. At all events, I thought, 'I will save them, if I am saved;' so I put them into a tin box, and got it soldered, and I covered it with an india-rubber sponge-wrapper, and kept it about me day and night. It was a foolish expedient, since you tell me the large box is safe; for they are gone, and I have come back to you poor, penniless, a failure—having brought you nothing of what I promised."

"Hush, darling!" he said, and the awe of unspeakable gratitude was in his voice. "Let not such a thought cross your mind; the deep has given me up all the treasure I ask from it. Let it keep the rest, unnamed, henceforth!"

Her arm was laid over his neck; the broad silver bracelet upon it touched his cheek. He thought of that other bracelet which was hidden in his breast, and, with a shudder, of the arm it had been taken from—the arm for whose clasp some one, somewhere, was, doubtless, vainly longing. He would not shock her with the image, but he said:

"You have worn your bracelet all this time? You might have been identified by it."

"No," she said; "it is a very common pattern. I have seen scores of them. There was a lady-like girl on board who had one. She took a great fancy to me, and wanted to give it to me to make a pair. Poor bracelet! It is the one only thing of all the past that I have left."

"Av ye plaze, sir," said Tim Denehy, sidling into the room, "as it's afther twelve, and Crissimis mornin'—more by token, here's many happy Crissimisses to yerself and the misthriss—Mary makes bould to say that too much talkin' isn't good for dhrownded people; an' she's comin' to take a shake down beside herself here, in case she'd be a little wake, or lonely-like, before mornin'. An' I misremimbered, in the confusion that was in it, to give yer honour something that ould Biddy Sheedy found in the misthriss's pocket whin she tuk the wet clothes off of her. She gev' it to me, very pertickler, yer honour; but it wint out o' my head till this minnit."

So saying, Tim Denehy put into Richard Peveril's hands the parcel, sewn in a sponge wrapper, which had escaped, when so much life and treasure went down into Davy's Locker.

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